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IRRC

Kathy Cooper

From: Phaedra Tinder <pctinder@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, June 28, 2015 11:29 PM
To: taxisforallphiladelphia@gmail.com; IRRC; dweldon@philapark.org; jney@philapark.org
Subject: My support for proposed rulemaking 126-11 "Modern Taxicab Standards" 2015 JUN 29 AM 9:08

Dear lawmakers and decision-makers,

I am writing you to support this proposition that would require retiring cabs in Philadelphia be replaced with wheelchair accessible cabs. I don't often write to legislators or sign petitions, often because the issues are complex and I don't feel uniquely qualified to offer an opinion. But this proposition not only makes perfect sense, and I support it on that measure, but I have been lucky enough to know disabled people in Philadelphia who would benefit tremendously from this measure. And I know that many people who are not personally acquainted with disabled people often do not take their struggles seriously.

My friend K has cerebral palsy and requires the use of a mechanical wheelchair at all times. K is a joyful person, very dedicated, generous, and thoughtful. She brings happiness to every room she enters. In order to join us for dinner, the movies, or any other event, she has to dedicate several hours ahead of time to coordinate her transportation according to the cabs' availabilities. On top of that, at least half the time, her scheduled cab doesn't arrive. Her rides are subsidized by Medicare as a necessary medical expense; her wheelchair is too heavy for anyone to lift (it weighs 400+ lbs) and there is not adequate sidewalk for her to safely travel home, not considering the several mile distance. Most SEPTA transit cannot accommodate wheelchairs. I and others have waited with her until 2am after getting out of a restaurant at 11pm while the cab companies drag their feet getting her a ride, or simply have no cabs to offer because of mechanical failures or the needs of other riders. This is unacceptable, but unsurprising when a city of 1.5 million people, 150,000 of whom have disabilities and an increasing share of whom will be elderly over the coming decades, has only 7 wheelchair-accessible cabs.

Besides being an act of basic human decency, funding this measure will be strategically good for Philadelphia. Uber, Lyft, and other unlicensed cabs are gaining in popularity at traditional cabs' expense. But Uber has declined responsibility for complying with the ADA standards, claiming that they are a technology company, not a transportation company. Gradually replacing outdated medallioned cabs with wheelchair-accessible vehicles would make licensed cabs more competitive against these companies and bring in more revenue to the State. Increasing accessibility for disabled Philadelphians by reducing the inconveniences of long wait and travel times and improving reliability of service will also increase revenue, as these people will be much more able to work, dine, and enjoy the city of Brotherly Love.

I think it is easy for people like me, and most likely most of you, who are not physically disabled, to overlook immense challenges and inconveniences that disabled people have to deal with on a daily basis. It's easy enough to build decorative steps to an apartment or restaurant, but doing so makes it impossible for someone like K to attend or live there. Failing to make these accommodations when we can sends the message that their lives are less important, less worthy of meaning, less entitled to the pursuit of happiness. Accommodations aren't always possible, and I have found disabled people to be very understanding of the limitations that sometimes exist in meeting every idiosyncratic need. But this is not one of those times. This measure would simply replace a vehicle, which is already scheduled for replacement, with a vehicle that can serve every citizen of Philadelphia instead of a privileged class of able-bodied citizens. I think this is the right thing to do, for everyone.

I urge you to support this measure to the fullest extent you can.

Sincerely,
Phaedra Tinder