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Center for Independence of the Disabled, NY

MEMORANDUM IN SUPPORT
S8119C (Senator Comrie)
A10303 (Assembly member Dinowitz)

June 8, 2020

The Center for Independence of the Disabled, NY serves people with disabilities in all aspects of their lives. Transportation is one major issue for many. Many are reliant on Access-A-Ride (AAR), the New York City Paratransit.

The Coronavirus continues to affect all New Yorkers. But people with disabilities who rely on paratransit are affected in a different manner. They have elevated rates of COVID-19 cases and deaths. Individuals reliant on paratransit include seniors, people who are immunocompromised, and/or have chronic disabilities. They also often reside in low-income communities and/or communities of color.

People with disabilities who use paratransit don't have other forms of travel available to them because they cannot substitute their form of transportation. The lack of accessible subways and buses is the exact reason they are eligible and forced to rely on paratransit.

Due to this pandemic travel has to be safe for the riders as well as the paratransit drivers and drivers of contracted companies.

S8119C/A10303 would require all paratransit agencies and providers to continue basic precautions that have been put in place since the pandemic began in March, including:

- Dispatching individuals rather than shared rides to the maximum extent possible, to facilitate social distancing within paratransit vehicles.
- Provision of personal protective equipment including face masks, gloves, hand sanitizer for paratransit drivers and contractors.
- Postponing the expiration of eligibility for current paratransit customers through at least August 31, 2020.
- Suspension of in-person eligibility assessments through at least August 31, 2020, to ensure social distancing can be maintained.
- applicants' submission of their doctors' medical documents be accepted for eligibility.
- During this ongoing pandemic, many people with disabilities who use paratransit cannot afford private cars services. As paratransit users they cannot avail themselves to buses and/or subways.

Amending the Transportation Law by adding the language found in bills S8119C/A10303 will help ensure the safety of people with disabilities, who cannot use other forms of public transportation, to travel to work, healthcare appointments, and other necessary travel as our state gradually reopens.