

City Council committee meets after livery driver's suicide

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The City Council's new For-Hire Vehicle Committee met for the first time Monday — and heard testimony from several people advocating for a cap on the number of livery drivers in the Big Apple.

“We cannot allow the number to balloon to 200,000 or 300,000 drivers,” Rep. Adriano Espaillat insisted at the hearing, a week after a broke livery driver, Douglas Schifter, [killed himself at the gates of City Hall](#).

see also

[Livery driver blamed politicians for his financial ruin before City Hall suicide](#)

Schifter blamed his financial plight on the increasing number of for-hire vehicles on city streets, [writing in a suicide note on Facebook](#) that it had become impossible to earn a living as a driver.

Before the hearing, black car drivers held a vigil for Schifter outside City Hall.

Espaillat proposed an eight-point plan that includes dismantling the Taxi & Limousine Commission altogether and replacing it with an agency better prepared to address modern innovations like Uber.

He pushed the committee to cap the number of for-hire vehicles and reduce fines for black car and livery drivers.

Former TLC head Matthew Daus also said he supported a cap and a ban on the practice of surge pricing.

The current TLC Commissioner, Meera Joshi, said the number of city drivers has ballooned “at a rate nobody contemplated” and agreed the e-hail industry needs a “growth control mechanism.”

see also

[Why more cabbies are killing themselves](#)

She also addressed [the recent suicides of two licensed TLC drivers](#).

Black car drivers booed and yelled “shame” when Joshi outlined the existing steep fines drivers face for picking up illegal passengers. Yellow cab drivers say there’s not enough enforcement.

Councilman Ruben Diaz Sr. accused TLC agents of entrapping and abusing drivers by pretending to be helpless people needing rides.

“These drivers are trying to do the right thing and the TLC is using entrapment to get their enforcement numbers,” Diaz claimed.