



## Urban Justice Center

666 Broadway, 10<sup>th</sup> floor, New York, NY 10012  
Tel: (646) 602-5600 • Fax: (212) 533-4598

**Statement by Saba Waheed, Principal Researcher of the  
Community Development Project at the Urban Justice Center,  
to the Taxi and Limousine Commission of the City of New York**

**Regarding Draft Environmental Impact Statement  
and Issuance of 900 New Taxi Medallions  
January 7, 2004**

My name is Saba Waheed, I am the Principal Researcher at the Urban Justice Center's Community Development Project. In September of 2003, we issued a report called *Unfare: Taxi Drivers and the Cost of Moving the City*, a copy of which has been supplied with this testimony. As the city moves towards making a final decision regarding the sale of 900 new medallions, it is important to consider the impact this will have on drivers. Based on the report, we found that drivers were in a state of extreme economic hardship. The report was based on a survey of almost 600 drivers and is the largest pool of drivers ever surveyed. The survey offered a rare glimpse into the working conditions of drivers. The report results are striking. Drivers are paying city-regulated 2003 operating and living costs while taking in taxi fares set in 1996. As the industry stands today, increasing the number of medallions will do little to alleviate the financial pressure of drivers; without a fare increase, and decrease in operating costs, the industry will continue to provide substandard working conditions for all drivers.

The structure of the industry places drivers at a disadvantage, as they typically have high upfront job-related costs without the guarantee of a decent take home pay. Based on the report, only 30% of drivers were owner drivers, with the remaining working under the leasing system for the medallion needed to drive a taxi in the City. Drivers reported daily operating costs amounting to an average of \$137, half of which consisted of paying just for the cost of the medallion. Over a period of month, they will have paid out over \$3,000 in operating costs. And yet, most shocking in the results were that, during the time the surveys were taken, average take home earnings were as low as \$22.