

November 29th, 2021

Attn: General Government and Licensing Committee

RE: GL27.19 – Update on Outstanding Vehicle of Hire Directives

Dear Chair and Committee Members;

Go Be Safe (GBS) is a ride reimbursement program designed to support access to safe door-to-door travel for Canadian residents who may be at risk of violence or targeting due to race, gender, ability, or age.

Our program was established in April 2021, in response to the rise in anti-Asian sentiment during the onset of COVID-19. At first, our focus was to respond to the growing number of anti-Asian violence happening in Toronto and Vancouver. These attacks would occur in public spaces, day or night, and panic was rapidly spreading amongst the Asian community; many feared for their safety and for their loved ones. Our mission was to ensure that no Canadian would be forced to choose between preserving their personal safety or affordably getting home during a period of financial insecurity.

Since then, the program has expanded its scope and serviced more than 200+ individuals providing necessary support to the most vulnerable within the community.

We are writing today in support of the timely implementation of the City of Toronto vehicle-for-hire driver training program to ensure that ridesharing remains an accessible transportation option for often targeted communities - including women, queer, trans, BIPOC, and the elderly.

Hate Crimes and Transportation

In 2021, the Toronto Police Services reported a 51% increase in hate crimes across the city. The most targeted included Jewish, Black, LGBTQ and Asian communities while members of the Asian and South Asian communities were frequently assaulted.

Ridesharing with Uber helps provide a safer way to get home late at night, and fill in transportation gaps. In a recent analysis by Uber, 81% of woman-identified riders say that safety is an important factor in their choice to use Uber. Half of woman-identified riders agreed that Uber is often the safest way for them to travel home.

Our Work with Uber

Working with Uber was valuable in helping plug the inevitable service gaps in public transport, especially when public transportation options become limited further into the evening, making it safer to get home - with clear evidence that the presence of the service improves safety.

Pausing licensing is concerning to us at GBS as our service hinges on ensuring the most vulnerable can rely on a safe journey home. With the inevitable increase in wait times and prices for riders, it limits the amount of people who can benefit from the service.

Therefore, we are strongly urging that City Council to reconsider any pauses to the program on behalf of GBS and the communities we serve. We are asking the members of the Committee to put the unique needs of the Asian, LGBTQ, women, BIPOC, elderly and the differently abled at the forefront and prioritizing the development and implementation of the driver-for-hire driver training program.

Sincerely

Julie Kim

Founder of Go Be Safe

