

Congressman Thomas R. Suozzi (NY-03)

Prepared Remarks:

House Transportation and Infrastructure

Subcommittee on Highways and Transit Hearing

"Examining the Future of Transportation Network Companies: Challenges and Opportunities"

Good morning. Thank you to Chairwoman Holmes-Norton, Ranking Member Davis, and Members of the Committee for allowing us to testify here today.

I know you have a big challenge trying to determine what policies are necessary to try and ensure that the new industry of Transportation Network Companies (TNCs) provides safe, efficient, and cost-effective solutions to consumers and employees.

I am here today, to speak about HR 3262, Sami's Law, which has been sponsored by Congressman Smith and I. I would like to thank Congressman Smith for his leadership on this issue.

Earlier this year when news reports surfaced about the tragic and horrific death of Sami Josephson, a New Jersey friend of mine and a friend and neighbor of the Josephson family contacted me to work on legislation to ensure that no other parent experienced the devastating loss of a child in the way that the Josephson's did.

I later discovered Congressman Smith, who represents the Josephson's, was also working on the issue.

Sami Josephson called for an Uber and entered the wrong car. That night, she was murdered. This Smith/Suozzi bill works to provide consumers with a level of safety BEFORE entering a vehicle.

Our bill's safety provisions are common-sense and easy to implement, including requiring states to:

Require a scannable QR (Quick Response) code on the vehicle window that matches the QR code on your phone and, as proposed by a disability group, an audio personal authentication number in lieu of the QR code to make sure this is the correct car before the disabled passenger enters;

Require TNC's to have illuminated signs that are visible in both day and night and are readable from fifty feet.

Require TNC drivers to have both front and back license plates. Currently, 19 states require only one plate; and

Prohibit the sale of illuminated TNC signs and the display of such signs by individuals who are NOT drivers for a TNC company.

As we began researching this issue, I was surprised to learn that transportation network companies (TNCs), a relatively new business model, are regulated very differently across state and local borders.

While some states and cities, such as New York City, have implemented new rules such as creating a new license category for "High-Volume For-Hire Services", TNCs have been mostly left to create their own policies for preventing and tracking violence or abuse to their passengers.

We have all heard about the horrific reports of assault and abuse incidents involving both TNC passengers and drivers. That is why our bill also requires a GAO study on the prevalence of assault and abuse perpetrated on riders by TNC drivers of ride-hailing vehicles, and on TNC drivers by passengers.

This data will be instrumental in determining any other safety procedures may be necessary to ensure the safety of everyone who uses a ride sharing application.

There is no way to describe the sadness, horror, and pain that Sami's death caused to her family and to her community. She lived a vibrant and loving life. She had her whole life ahead of her. She planned to study law, had hopes and dreams. We must do everything we can to prevent what happened to Sami from happening to anyone else.

Congress now has a chance to come together and enact change which will protect people. It is our duty to do all we can do protect our constituents. I urge the entire committee, Democrats and Republicans, to pass this bill as soon as possible.

Thank you once again for allowing me this opportunity and I look forward to working with you all to get this done.