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LDF Statement on Passage of New York City Council Bill Increasing Penalty for Taxi Drivers Who Refuse Service Based on Race

The NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF), led by President and Director-Counsel [Sherrilyn Ifill](#), has [consistently spoken out](#) about the persistent problem of taxi drivers refusing service to New Yorkers based on their race. LDF has engaged in [preliminary conversations](#) with the Taxi and Limousine Commission (TLC) about remedies, and has testified about the need to strengthen – not weaken – penalties for taxi drivers who deny service to New Yorkers of color. Late yesterday, after LDF’s lobbying, the New York City Council passed a bill that would modestly increase such a penalty. Ifill issued the following statement after the bill’s passage:

“For decades, African Americans have lived with the uncertainty of whether a yellow cab, licensed by the city, will refuse to serve them. Beyond violating the law, these persistent ride refusals are an attack on our dignity. That’s why I’ve been vocal about my own experience with such discrimination, and why we’ve worked with the TLC to try to end these unacceptable denials of service. LDF testified before the City Council to urge that penalties for drivers who break anti-discrimination laws be strengthened, not weakened, to send a clear message that New York will not tolerate this anymore. As a result of LDF’s advocacy, the bill passed includes a modest increase, but one that is still short of what’s needed for the penalty to serve as an effective deterrent and just punishment. Discriminatory ride refusals have been illegal for 50 years, and they will persist for at least 50 more unless the city starts taking this problem more seriously.”

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Founded in 1940, the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF) is the nation’s first civil and human rights law organization and has been completely separate from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) since 1957—although LDF was originally founded by the NAACP and shares its commitment to equal rights. LDF’s Thurgood Marshall Institute is a multi-disciplinary and collaborative hub within LDF that launches targeted campaigns and undertakes innovative research to shape the civil rights narrative. In media attributions, please refer to us as the NAACP Legal Defense Fund or LDF.