

Testimony in support of SB 1166 (2025)

Chair Jama, Vice-Chair Bonham, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Kate Suisman. I am an attorney at the Northwest Workers' Justice Project (NWJP). Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this important bill. We represent workers in low-wage jobs when bad things happen to them at work: when they are not paid, or are discriminated against for being in a protected class or are retaliated against for speaking up. Finally, we engage in policy advocacy and try to bring the important perspectives of workers in low-wage jobs and immigrant workers to these policy discussions.

I write in support of SB 1166, a long-overdue bill that will give rideshare drivers needed protection. NWJP believes strongly in the rights of all workers. We fight for fair pay, fair conditions and fair treatment. Rideshare drivers lack many of the rights, benefits and protections that other workers have. Though few of our recent clients have been drivers, many of the struggles mirror those of our client community. The bill will make a number of important changes to this industry that for too long has treated drivers as part of their corporate machinery, including:

- **Clarity on compensation rates**- clarity is needed on how much you make when you work. It is impossible to plan your life without knowing this. Currently, the pay system used by Transportation Network Companies (TNC) is opaque and leaves workers guessing how much they will earn from a ride. This bill will establish minimums so drivers know what they will earn. These amounts will be analyzed each year by BOLI and can increase based on the consumer price index. This is an important step towards transparency and security for workers.
- **Clarity on consequences**- Some employers keep expectations undefined in order to create a sense of unease and confusion among workers. Some use threats of retaliation to keep workers from asserting their rights. Lack of transparency around account deactivation seems to be a tool that TNC employers can wield to hold power over workers. This bill will require clear explanation of what leads to deactivation, just cause and due process rights for workers accused of something that could lead to deactivation. Just cause protections and due process should be part of every discipline issue in any workplace and this bill will ensure these systems of fairness are present at TNCs.
- **Worker education**- Rideshare drivers are uniquely vulnerable due to the lack of protections that “employees” have, and instead are treated as independent contractors. Giant corporations treat drivers as parts of the larger machinery, and not as individuals. The bill will create a resource center for these workers. This type of worker resource center is needed in many industries, and drivers are a good place to start.
- **Right to accrue and use sick time**- This issue is highly relevant for contingent workers like rideshare drivers. It also comes up regularly for our farmworker clients, who have a nearly impossible time accessing sick time. This bill will make sure drivers are allowed protected sick leave like other workers are. There is also a retaliation protection which is needed to make sure workers are not punished for using protected leave.
- **Transparency on earnings**- similar to the first bullet here, transparency is needed on the wages you will receive, how much the employer keeps, and your tips. Since these workers do not get paystubs as most workers do, the bill creates a receipt system so workers can understand their earnings.
- **Transparency on the industry**- because TNCs deny they are employers, they are not regulated or analyzed in the way other industries are. The bill requires specific, regular reporting to BOLI on trips, deactivation, earnings and other key data.

- **Task force on meaningful access to benefits for TNC company drivers-** this is a key part of the bill. Similar to farmworkers, contingent and temporary workers have a hard time understanding what benefits if any they qualify for, how those benefits accrue, and how to use them. The bill puts together a board comprised of drivers, TNC staff, stakeholders and BOLI to do a deep dive into the issues surrounding benefits including the newly-created ones in the bill.
- **Notice of rights to drivers-** this is also an important part of the bill. Drivers should receive notice of their rights from the employer, especially since those rights are distinct from any other part of the workforce. This is a simple, non-onerous requirement that will help workers understand their rights as drivers.
- **BOLI enforcement only-** it is important to note that drivers will not have a private right of action to take the TNC to court if they break the law, but they can go to BOLI for enforcement.
- **Status as employee v. independent contractor-** the bill does not try to fix the longstanding issue of misclassification of rideshare drivers, but it also states clearly that regardless of classification, workers have the same rights under the bill.

Rideshare drivers face many of the same issues as other workers in precarious employment situations- lack of transparency about earnings and discipline, difficulty accessing benefits among others. SB 1166 is a comprehensive attempt to clarify and establish basic minimums for drivers.

Please support this important bill.