

MEMORANDUM OF SUPPORT

S.7508 (TED Budget)

A.9508 (TED Budget)

Part H -- Budget language to amend the vehicle and traffic law, in relation to unlawful solicitation of ground transportation services at an airport

The New York Aviation Management Association (NYAMA) supports this legislation to increase the penalties for unlawful solicitation of ground transportation services at airports.

Executive Budget Part H establishes a new traffic violation for solicitation of illegal ground transportation at airports with fines ranging from \$3,000 for the first violation and up to \$10,000 for a third or subsequent violation. It provides for mandatory license and registration suspension for violations of the new traffic infraction of 30 days for the first violation and up to 180 days for third or subsequent violations.

A person unlawfully solicits ground transportation services at an airport when at an airport, such person without being authorized to do so by the airport operator, or without having made a prior agreement to provide ground transportation services to a specific patron, offers or engages in any business, trade or commercial transactions involving ground transportation services.

Current law establishing enforcement measures for illegal operation at airports has not kept pace with shifts in enforcement practices and the sophisticated nature of these criminal operations. As such, this legislation would serve to establish heightened civil penalties for those involved in these illicit activities and would create real deterrents that will ensure persistent violators think twice about their recidivist activities.

Airport “hustlers” are unlicensed and unlawful operators that solicit and offer fares for illegal transportation services. Hustlers take business away from thousands of legitimate, hardworking taxi and for-hire small business owners and drivers who are a significant and critically important component of transportation services at airports. Too often, passengers unfamiliar with ground transportation options at an airport are solicited by illegal drivers upon exiting the terminal. Though the practice is prohibited, the relatively small fines are accepted by many violators as the cost of doing business.

Enactment of Part H would bolster the economic viability of legitimate taxi and for-hire drivers and small businesses who serve as critical members of New York’s airport communities by establishing necessary and appropriate disincentives to diminish illegal hustling operations at airports in New York State. It would also increase protections for vulnerable travelers who are taken advantage of and put at risk by these illegitimate operators.

For all these reasons, NYAMA urges the adoption of Part H as part of the final state budget.