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Contact: Rich Stein (914) 384-9680 and rich@pythiapublic.com

Black Car Fund Announces New Death Benefit for Families of Drivers Killed on the Job

Guaranteed benefit of \$50,000 established after tragic death of member driver

Goldstein: "The Black Car Fund is fully committed to our drivers,"

New York, N.Y. - The Black Car Fund announced today a new death benefit for families of member drivers killed on the job. The death benefit, which is guaranteed at \$50,000, ensures that families of deceased drivers will not also suffer financially. The BCF made the announcement with the Ameen family after member driver Roothul Ameen was killed last June.

Mr. Ameen, was a driver for Big Apple, Inc living in Bayshore, Long Island with his wife and four young children. In June, he was struck and killed while tending to his car on the side of the Long Island Expressway. At the recommendation of **Ira Goldstein, the Executive Director of The Black Car Fund**, the fund's Board of Directors established the death benefit shortly after Mr. Ameen's passing in order to protect families of member drivers in the event of work related deaths. This new death benefit is in addition to any other death benefit member drivers' families may have under the workers compensation law.

"The Black Car Fund is fully committed to our drivers," said Goldstein. "While we are heartbroken over the loss of Mr. Ameen, we are pleased to offer this new, guaranteed death benefit to his family and all our members. Driving is high risk work which requires a supportive workforce model."

Black car drivers are independent contractors who enjoy workers' compensation and insurance coverage through the Black Car Fund. The Fund also pays drivers to attend wellness seminars and safety trainings to meet the highest professional standards, serving as a model in the new "gig economy."

"The challenges of workers not having any benefits in the emerging gig economy makes today particularly meaningful, and makes me very proud to be a founding member of the Black Car Fund that developed a business model that was ahead of its time," said **Diana Clemente, President of Big Apple Car, Inc.** "I along with my peers did it because our drivers are the backbones of our companies, our extended families, and when they suffer, we suffer too. I am honored and grateful that my industry peers saw fit to assist my former driver's family after his tragic accidental work related death."

“I want to thank the Black Car Fund and Diane Clemente at Big Apple Car for being supportive and acting to relieve at least some of our suffering,” said **Shafqat Khan, the brother of Roohul Ameen**. “This is the first time this is happening, and in the future, families can rest assured that they will not suffer financially on top of their human loss.

“We recognize that black car drivers are working people who face high risk conditions daily,” said **Berj Haroutunian, Chairman of the Black Car Fund**. “They are always there for New Yorkers and we that’s why we must be there for them and their families when they need it most.”

“Once again, the Black Car Fund set an industry-wide example on how workers should be treated,” said **City Council Transportation Chair Ydanis Rodriguez (D-Washington Heights)**. “Driving is not the safest job, especially in a dense urban center, which is why I have been a leading proponent of Vision Zero's goals to end traffic fatalities for good. However, the harsh reality is that fatalities do occur; and in these tragic cases, drivers deserve the peace of mind that their families will be taken care of if they are taken from us too soon.”

“City drivers often provide central but dangerous services, and it is our responsibility to support them and their families so they are able to live the quality of life they deserve,” said **Councilman I. Daneek Miller (D- St. Albans)**. “Unfortunately, tragedies such as these make it necessary this death benefit to exist and I applaud The Black Car Fund for establishing it and making it retroactive for these workers.”

“Each time we get behind the wheel, each of us is at risk of being injured or killed in an accident,” said **Jim Conigliaro Jr., founder of the Independent Drivers Guild**. “For New York's professional drivers, who transport hundreds of thousands of passengers per day, the on-the-job risks are very real. With the addition of this benefit, the Black Car Fund is making an important improvement to its safety net for the drivers who keep our city moving.”

Background about the Black Car Fund

The New York Black Car Operators’ Injury Compensation Fund was created by statute (Chapter 49 of the laws of 1999) for the purpose of providing Workers' Compensation coverage to independent contractor Black Car operators in the state of New York. The statute was signed into law by Governor George Pataki in May 1999. On October 1, 1999, the billing, collecting and remitting portion of the statute took effect. On January 20, 2000, workers’ compensation coverage for drivers affiliated with member bases took effect. In later years, our company adopted a shorter title, and while we still have the same official title, we are widely known, simply as The Black Car Fund.

The statute covers all drivers of The Black Car Fund member bases in the state of New York, although 98% of the companies are based in the greater New York City Metropolitan area. Bases must become members of The Black Car Fund if they meet the criteria outlined in the statute –

meaning they cannot own more than 50% their vehicles and must do a minimum of 90% of their business on a non-cash basis. Black Car and limousine companies operating outside of New York State are also required to become members of The Black Car Fund if they do work in the state of New York and if they meet the criteria outlined in the statute. The Fund derives its income from a 2.5% surcharge, which is billed and collected by member bases from their clients and then remitted to The Fund.

Today, The Fund has approximately 300 member bases and collectively there are more than 50,000 affiliated drivers covered by Workers' Compensation.

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From left to right: **Jim Conigliaro Jr., Council Transportation Chairman Ydanis Rodriguez (D-Washington Heights); Shafqat Khan the brother of Roohul Ameen; Farwah Ameen and Hadiyah Ameen, the daughters of Roohul Ameen, TLC Commissioner Meera Joshi; Councilman I. Daneek Miller (D- St. Albans); Ira Goldstein, Executive Director of the Black Car Fund; Diana Clemente, President of Big Apple Car, Inc.; Berj Haroutunian, Chairman of the Black Car Fund.**