

Hon. Bill de Blasio
Mayor
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

#FAIRFARES

December 12, 2018

Dear Mayor de Blasio:

Last June, we stood with you and City Council leaders at Fulton Center to announce the historic budget agreement to extend half-price subway and bus fares to working-age New Yorkers living at or below the federal poverty line. As January 2019 fast approaches, all the low-income New Yorkers we promised to help are eagerly waiting to learn how and when they will be able to sign up for and start benefitting from their reduced-fare MetroCards. Among them are: the working poor, especially immigrants who do not qualify for public benefits or are fearful of accepting federal programs that might put themselves or family members at risk; the unemployed searching for work; and low-income college students struggling to get the education they need to get ahead.

We write now with deep concern that, with less than a month before the scheduled launch, we have not yet seen a plan to offer all eligible New Yorkers an opportunity to enroll in Fair Fares. Moreover, the one aspect of the plan that has been made public would limit the discount to 7-day and 30-day unlimited passes. That restriction makes little sense. Participants should be able to access the full range of fare payment options available to senior citizens and people with disabilities who are also eligible for half-price fares. Of all New Yorkers, those in poverty can least afford to lay out money for transit fares a full week or month in advance. The City and MTA should take the steps necessary to extend Fair Fares to as many ticket options as possible to meet the needs of eligible riders.

The Fair Fares program is fully funded and we expect it to be fully implemented in a timely way. You and the City Council committed \$106 million based on a projected annual cost of \$212 million to cover eligible New Yorkers below poverty, with implementation set to begin six months into FY2019 to allow time to plan how it would be rolled out. We now need to fulfill our promise to New Yorkers and ensure that everyone who qualifies for this transformative new benefit can obtain it by purchasing the most affordable fare type for their needs.

The agreement to make Fair Fares a reality was widely hailed as a progressive victory, one that we are all proud of and that will be a meaningful step in making the turnstile a gateway—instead of a barrier—to economic mobility. We look forward to learning the details and timetable for a plan that we can all stand together to celebrate next month.

Sincerely,

1199SEIU United Healthcare Workers East
32BJ SEIU
ALIGN
Bronx Defenders
Brooklyn Defender Services
CAAAY
Chinese-American Planning Council
Citizen Action New York
Collegiate Congress
Community Service Society
Fast Food Justice
Fiscal Policy Institute
FPWA
Greater New York Labor-Religion Coalition
Judson Memorial Church
LatinoJustice PRLDEF
Legal Aid Society
Make the Road NY
Metropolitan Council on Jewish Poverty

New York Communities for Change
NYC Employment & Training Coalition
NYC Environmental Justice Alliance (NYC-EJA)
Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow
Planned Parenthood of NYC
Pratt Center
Police Reform Organizing Project (PROP)
PowHer New York
Regional Plan Association
Restaurant Opportunities Center of New York
Riders Alliance
Straphangers Campaign
RWDSU
StreetsPAC
Transportation Alternatives
Tri-State Transportation Campaign
The West Side Commons
VOCAL-NY
Women's Center for Education & Career Advancement