

Media Advisory for February 26, 2020 – 11:00AM

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**UBER & LYFT DRIVERS TO RALLY TO PROTEST
UNSANITARY RESTROOMS AT LAX; DELIVER THOUSANDS
OF PETITION SIGNATURES TO AIRPORT OFFICIALS
DEMANDING IMMEDIATE ACTION TO AVOID PUBLIC
HEALTH CRISIS**

Los Angeles, CA — Dozens of Uber and Lyft drivers with the Mobile Workers Alliance will rally at the Los Angeles International Airport rideshare holding lot to protest the dangerous and unsanitary conditions of the restrooms provided to drivers, before delivering a petition with more than 2,000 signatures to Los Angeles World Airports (LAWA) officials. Restrooms at the rideshare holding lot are disease ridden and unsanitary, with insufficient maintenance causing human waste and paper trash to accumulate quickly, often spilling out of the toilets and onto floors and surrounding areas.

Presently, there are only six portable toilets and single handwashing station for the thousands of drivers who utilize the lot every day. Drivers forced to use the portable toilets due so at serious personal risk, with at least one driver being hospitalized after contracting severe conjunctivitis.

Just days after drivers launched their petition demanding clean, safe facilities, LAWA officials replaced the portable toilets with identical units and added a new handwashing station, a response seen as wholly inadequate by drivers. Even with these changes, the number of toilets falls well below Cal/OSHA sanitation standards and the facilities are in a constant state of filth that often renders one or more unusable.

“This is one of the many examples of the ways Uber and Lyft shirk their responsibilities to their employees and to the public,” driver and MWA member Linda Valdivia said. “They would never treat their office workers like this, but because they misclassify us as independent contractors, they are getting away with creating a massive public health hazard and forcing us to fight for the barest human dignity.”

The drivers are petitioning LAWA to provide drivers with restrooms at least equivalent to the ones provided to the public at the LAX-it rideshare pickup lot.

Despite the passage of Assembly Bill 5 last fall, which imposes stricter rules on what workers can be classified as independent contractors, gig economy companies like Uber and Lyft continue to misclassify drivers as independent contractors. This means that drivers are not eligible for basic worker protections like minimum wage, paid sick leave and Cal/OSHA compliant restrooms.

“The toilet situation at the LAX lot is absolutely disgusting,” driver and MWA member Armen Khachatur Oganessian said. “There is urine and feces not just in the portable toilets, but also on the ground surrounding them. It’s totally unsafe for drivers and passengers. LAX is the second busiest airport in the world and we drivers help keep it running. We deserve a safe and sanitary working environment.”

WHAT: Press conference and rally at the LAX TNC lot and delegation to the LAWA offices demanding clean restrooms for drivers

WHO: Uber and Lyft drivers, including a driver who contracted conjunctivitis from the toilets, public health experts and LAX workers

WHEN: Wednesday, February 26, 2020 starting at 11:00AM

WHERE: Carl E Nielsen Youth Park
6000 Will Rogers St., Los Angeles, CA 90045

VISUALS: Large posters showing the state of the toilets and the driver's infected eye, signs demanding better conditions, flags and Mobile Workers Alliance paraphernalia.

Background:

The LAX TNC lot is the primary holding area for rideshare drivers waiting to pick up passengers at the airport. The lot holds about 300 cars at a time and is constantly churning as drivers come in and out, with most waiting for thirty minutes to an hour. The six toilets currently there are inadequate for the number of drivers and feature no running water. The unsanitary conditions imperil both drivers and their passengers.

OSHA standards for worksites of comparable size dictate at least one toilet seat and one urinal per 50 workers, with toilets separated by gender. Neither of these standards is currently being met.

Drivers who opt not to use the toilets must give up their place in line to find a clean restroom, which means losing an hour or more of working time. Since many drivers earn less than minimum wage after expenses, this is an enormous sacrifice just to take care of a basic human need.

In February, drivers with Mobile Workers Alliance began circulating a petition to improve the restrooms and gathered more than 1000 signatures in the first 24 hours.

The petition drive was necessary because drivers are misclassified as independent contractors and therefore not entitled to basic working standards that employers provide to employees.

Mobile Workers Alliance, a group of more than 15,000 Southern California drivers, has been fighting for drivers to be correctly classified as drivers, taking bold action to support the passage of AB5, including a three day, 1,000-mile caravan from Los Angeles to the Bay Area to Sacramento and back last August. With AB5 now established law, MWA drivers are calling on state officials to enforce it and demanding that gig companies like Uber and Lyft correctly classify drivers as employees.

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