



THE COUNCIL
OF
THE CITY OF NEW YORK
CITY HALL
NEW YORK, N.Y. 10007

June 16, 2009

Howard H. Roberts, Jr.
President
MTA New York City Transit
2 Broadway
New York, NY 10004

Dear Mr. Roberts:

We, the undersigned members of New York City Council, respectfully write to urge the Transit Authority (TA) to abandon its policy of requiring transit employees to brand their religious headdresses with the TA's corporate logo. Without sacrificing the imperative of safety, the TA should be a welcoming employer for people of all faiths.

It is our understanding that for decades before 9/11/01, the TA's employees served the TA with distinction without a requirement that they brand their religious headdress. Nevertheless, after 9/11 the TA reversed course and began requiring subway operators, station agents, and bus drivers to place a TA logo on their religious headdresses in violation of many employees' religious practices.

The TA's main asserted reason for wanting its logo placed on religious headdress is that the TA employee, despite his or her uniform, would not be recognized as a TA employee. Despite this assertion, the TA, to our knowledge, has not cited one instance where a subway employee was unrecognizable in his or her TA uniform because he or she wears a religious headdress. In fact, the TA even honored one turbaned Sikh subway operator, Kevin Harrington, for safely guiding his passengers to safety on 9/11.

In addition, we are more troubled by what seems to be selective enforcement of the TA's employee headdress policy. The U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) conducted a study in January and February of 2005 and found that any MTA worker, other than a Sikh or Muslim, regularly wears whatever headdress they desire without a TA logo on it. During 24 hours of observation, the DOJ study found more than 100 instances of MTA workers wearing Yankees caps, fashion knit caps, and MTA-issued winter hats, all without a TA logo. Clearly, it does not make sense to selectively choose to have Muslim and Sikh employees brand their religious headgear with a corporate logo.

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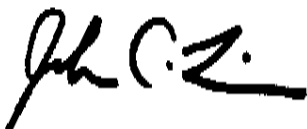
New York City is one of the most culturally and religiously diverse cities in the world, and the staff of the MTA should reflect that diversity. But this diversity is undermined by the branding of religious headgear with a corporate logo without any evidence that customer safety is actually enhanced by it. For this reason we ask you to continue to represent the value of this diversity by ending this unnecessary and unjust mandate.

If you would like to discuss this matter further, please don't hesitate to contact Bonnie Duen at 212-788-7022.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

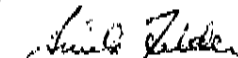
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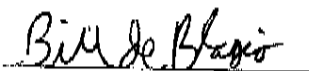
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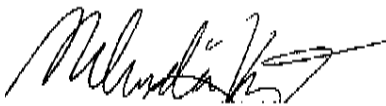
Hon. Councilmember
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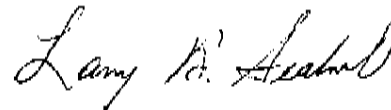
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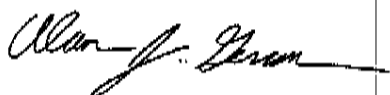
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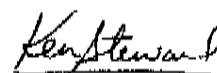
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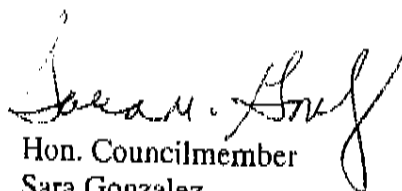
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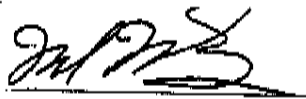
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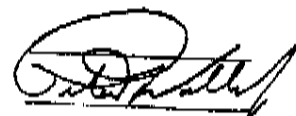
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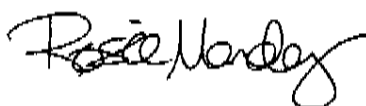
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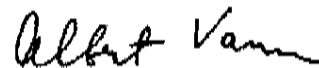
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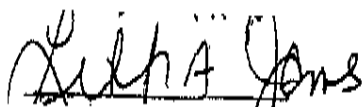
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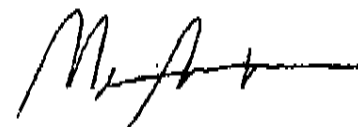
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Letitia James
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Annabel Palma
District # 18



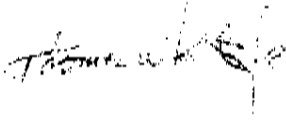
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