Testimony of Shernelle Wilson

In SUPPORT of SENATE BILL 1180: An Act Concerning Rideshare and Delivery Driver Minimum Standards.

March 9, 2023

Labor Committee

Dear Senator Kushner, Representative Sanchez, and members of the Labor Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly:

My name is Shernelle Wilson and I am a resident of Waterbury, Connecticut. I am an app-based driver, and I submit this testimony in support of An Act Concerning Rideshare and Delivery Driver Minimum Standards. For too long, Connecticut drivers like myself have been suffering from decreasing pay with no answers as to how or why. This bill will ensure that we get a baseline fair share that Connecticut drivers deserve. The bill accomplishes this through three provisions: Pay, Transparency, and Reciprocity.

Pay. I have been a delivery app driver for 3 years. During that time, I have been paid less and less for longer and longer trips. When I started it was the height of the pandemic and the money was good. I would work 5 days a week and make $600 a week when it was busy. However, now I am lucky to make $200 a week working the same amount of hours. These delivery app companies even participate in unlogical and deceitful practices. If a customer doesn't answer the door or they give the wrong address and the order has to be canceled, I am given a $3.50 cancellation fee. However, the order would have paid me $1-$2 originally. This makes no sense at all as to why I am paid more when a delivery is canceled than when I perform the actual delivery. However, sometimes they don't even give us the cancellation fee when it is warranted by using some line or excuse. Just this week, I was on my way to Popeyes on Whalley Avenue in New Haven. All of a sudden, a large pothole I didn't see blew out my tire which cost me $90. I was no more than 10 feet away from the restaurant but when I called customer service, they would not give me the cancellation fee nor reimburse me for my lost tire. These companies also trick drivers into their pay by saying there is a boost of an extra $2 an order in this area. However, the companies lower the base price and add the boost to attract more drivers who think they are making more when they are making the same amount if there wasn't a boost. I will go sit in these boost areas in my car while seeing other drivers and the app saying the area is busy but not receive a single order for an hour which is a waste of time and my gas. This bill would drastically
increase and change my pay only for the better. Also, it would be an honest and transparent form of payment that hopefully will shine a light on these deceitful companies.

Transparency. How Transportation Network Companies (“TNC”) like Uber and Lyft calculate pay is hidden from drivers and passengers alike. When we complete a trip, we are not shown why we were paid what we were paid, and passengers do not see how much the driver gets when selecting how much to tip. I do not see how much the TNC makes off my labor, my per mile and per minute breakdown, or anything that lets me or my customers know whether I was fairly compensated or not for my labor. The transparency in this bill at the minimum would allow me to see that I am paid properly and the companies are not lying or tricking me. It would hold them to a standard of accountability. It would also help me plan when to work instead of paying money to work and going out with no point. It would also help me feel more comfortable working and using my car because I know I would receive fair transparent reciprocated wages instead of wasting money and wasting gas. Also, seeing my wages would help me to plan how best to help my family and especially my sister who I am saving to come from Trinidad and go to college. In addition, maybe I could actually afford to take a Saturday off to do what I want for a change.

Reciprocity. When Connecticut drivers drive to neighboring states and drop off a passenger, our apps shut off automatically—not allowing us to pick up any other passengers. As a result, we lose hours of pay driving back to Connecticut to resume work. I rarely take deliveries out of state anymore because the price is so abysmal! I will be paid $10 for a delivery but I will end up paying $30 in tolls and gas just to deliver the order because we are not compensated for return tolls. Sometimes in some states, I can get deliveries out of state but it tends to lead me further and further away from Connecticut late at night. That is very dangerous in an area you don't know or anyone knows you. Also, I fear almost falling asleep on the two-hour drive back to Connecticut which my life is not even close to the earnings I make delivering out of state. It's unfair that out-of-state drivers for delivery and rideshare can come to Connecticut and take all our rides and deliveries when we can't work in their state. We are already struggling with the little we do have. Day to day we barely make enough to live our lives but when out-of-state drivers come here and work, they flood an already oversaturated market.
In this screenshot, I drove a delivery almost 3 1/2 miles that took me almost 18 minutes but was only paid $2.53. Sometimes customers leave a tip but more times than not, they don't so I made a $0 profit after gas for this delivery.

Here are more screenshots where I was grossly underpaid:
My work as an app-based driver is riddled with uncertainty. When I start my day, I do not know how I will be paid, what states I will end up in, or how many more miles I will need to drive to make the same as yesterday or my rent for the next month. Only one thing is certain: regardless of how many bumps I hit on the road, TNCs will not pay me my fair share. The companies control all of this. This bill will change that.

Thank you for your time,

Shernelle Wilson