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Assemblymember 74th District

THE ASSEMBLY
STATE OF NEW YORK
ALBANY

Testimony in Support of the Adoption of a Program to Provide Full-Fare MetroCards to Students
Office of Assemblymember Harvey Epstein
May 21st, 2019

My name is Harvey Epstein and I am the Assemblymember representing New York's 74th Assembly District, which includes the neighborhoods of the Lower East Side, East Village, Stuyvesant Town/Peter Cooper Village, Murray Hill, Tudor City and the United Nations. Thank you to the members of the committee and all board members for the opportunity to testify before you regarding the proposal to eliminate half-fare student MetroCards and provide 3-trip full-fare cards to these students. I also want to thank President Byford and Sarah Meyer for taking a leadership role on this issue and working on a plan to bring equity into transportation for hundreds of thousands of kids and their families.

The data do not support a continuation of the status quo. According to the Department of Education, 66 percent of half-fare MetroCards shipped to schools and distributed to students are never used. Of the half-fare cards that are used, they are used on only 8 percent of school days.

Half-fare student MetroCards place economic burdens on schoolchildren and their families, forcing students entitled to a free public education to pay to have access to it. Furthermore, the difficulty associated with using the cards makes them essentially pointless: no school-age child is going to carry around the \$13.50 in coins per week that would make the cards useable, as the data show.

In addition to the financial hardships the half-fare cards can create, they also pose safety concerns: students who are only eligible for half-fare MetroCards can face dangerous situations where they may be forced to walk to school in the early hours of the morning or late at night because they do not have the remainder of the fare they need to use their MetroCard on the bus, or the full fare needed for the Subway.

I am proud to be joined by Riders Alliance and many of New York's half-fare student riders in encouraging the MTA to adopt a system that will provide 3-trip, full-fare cards to students who need them to get to school and extracurricular activities.

Thank you for the dedication you have shown towards helping New York's schoolchildren by considering this proposal. I also want to thank Emma, the student organizer from Eleanor Roosevelt High School who has been pushing for the end to the half-fare program for several years now. Providing full-fare MetroCards that students need to get to school will remove the barriers too many young New Yorkers face as they try to better themselves through education. I commend the MTA for the working towards equity for our city's students and I strongly support the adoption of the proposal.