



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Timothy M. Kennedy

Senator Kennedy and State Colleagues Advance Limo Safety Legislation

TIMOTHY M. KENNEDY January 14, 2020

| ISSUE: **LIMO AND BUS SAFETY, LIMOUSINE SAFETY, PASSENGER SAFETY LEGISLATION**



(Albany, NY) The Senate today advanced legislation that will help better protect New Yorkers from limousine crashes. The bills were created together with Assembly Democratic Majority colleagues based on testimony from families of victims involved in tragic crashes. This package of limo regulations will better protect passengers, ensure higher standards for professional drivers, improve passenger communication options, and increase penalties for bad actors who put public lives at risk.

“Limousines and celebrations usually go hand-in-hand, and the Senate Democratic Majority wants to keep it that way,” **Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins** said. “The crashes that have taken place because of unsafe limos and lax regulations are tragedies, and we have a responsibility to address this problem. The Senate Majority stands, and grieves, with the families who lost loved ones to limo crashes and who turned that suffering into activism. These bills, which have the support of the Senate Majority, Assembly Majority, and Governor Cuomo, will help improve safety, hold companies accountable, and save lives.”

The limo regulations and passenger safety legislation passed by the Senate includes:

- **Customer Service Resources:** This bill, [S.6185B](#), sponsored by Senator Rachel May, requires maintenance of a hotline and website for New Yorkers to report safety issues with stretch limos, and requires the information to be conspicuously posted in vehicles for passengers.
- **Drug and Alcohol Testing:** This bill, [S.6186B](#), sponsored by Senator Jen Metzger, requires pre-employment and random drug and alcohol testing in large for-hire vehicles.
- **Commercial GPS Requirements:** This bill, [S.6187C](#), sponsored by Senator Jim Gaughran, requires stretch limousines to use commercial GPS devices to assist them in using roads that are best suited for their vehicles.
- **Increased Penalties for Illegal U-Turns:** This bill, [S.6188B](#), sponsored by Senator Jim Gaughran, expands the U-turn ban to stretch limousines capable of carrying nine or more passengers including the driver, and increases the financial and criminal penalties for drivers making illegal U-turns.
- **Creation of Passenger Task Force:** This bill, [S.6189C](#), sponsored by Senator Anna Kaplan, creates a passenger safety task force to study and make recommendations on additional safety measures for stretch limousines such as anti-intrusion bars, roll-over protection, emergency exits, and improved coordination between the DOT and the DMV.

- **Seatbelt Requirements:** This bill, [S.6191C](#), sponsored by Senator Tim Kennedy, requires stretch limousines to be equipped with seat belts for every passenger for which the vehicle is rated. This includes a requirement for stretch limousines to be retrofitted with seat belts no later than January 1, 2023, and for any stretch limousine modified on or after January 1, 2021 to be equipped with seat belts.
- **Commercial Driving License Requirement:** This bill, [S.6192A](#), sponsored by Senator Tim Kennedy, requires limousine drivers operating vehicles capable of transporting nine or more passengers to have a passenger endorsed commercial driver's license.
- **Immobilization of Defective Limos:** This bill, [S.6193C](#), sponsored by Senator Tim Kennedy, authorizes the DOT to immobilize or impound a stretch limo with an out-of-service defect.
- **Website Requirements:** This bill, [S.6604B](#), sponsored by Senator James Sanders, Jr., requires the DMV to update its website regarding motor carrier safety information, and requires annual verifications on stretch limousine driver files with respect to disqualifying offenses, out of service defects, and crashes.
- **Seatbelt Requirements:** This bill, [S.7134](#), sponsored by Senator Brad Hoylman, expands seatbelt use requirements in for-hire vehicles.

Senate Transportation Committee Chair and bill sponsor Senator Tim Kennedy, said, “By passing this comprehensive package of legislation, the Senate and Assembly are strengthening standards across New York State, and changing the way the industry is regulated to ensure passenger safety is prioritized. The families who lost loved ones in the limo crashes in Schoharie and Cutchogue were instrumental in the pursuit of these reforms; their commitment to make New York safer will undoubtedly prevent other families from experiencing the same heartbreak they have endured. I thank Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins and Speaker Carl Heastie for working alongside us to fast-track this historic

deal, and I look forward to seeing these important measures enacted.”

Bill Sponsor Senator Jim Gaughran, said, “Today we are taking action on important limo safety legislation that will protect passengers and drivers alike. These bills, including mandatory seat belts and cracking down on illegal U-turns, are critical safety measures that will prevent tragic crashes like the one just a few years ago in Cutchogue, from happening again. I thank the brave and tireless advocacy of the families of the Cutchogue and Schoharie crashes for being the driving force behind today's bills and fighting for safety.”

Bill Sponsor Senator Brad Hoylman, said, “In 2018 alone, there were 40 fatal or critical injury crashes in taxis and livery vehicles. Seat belts are a proven way to save lives and prevent serious injuries — and as the horrific crash in Schoharie shows us, not wearing a seat belt can have tragic consequences. That’s why it’s so important for every passenger in a taxi or for-hire vehicle to buckle up. Thanks to the leadership of Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins, the new Senate Majority is passing common-sense legislation to ensure all New Yorkers are safe.”

Bill Sponsor Senator Anna Kaplan, said, “The unimaginable tragedies that took place in Cutchogue and Schoharie were a rude awakening for all New Yorkers about the safety of stretch limousines. As lawmakers, we have a duty to families across the state to take action to prevent such senseless tragedy from ever happening again, and I’m very proud to sponsor legislation as part of that effort to keep our residents safe.”

Bill Sponsor Senator Rachel May, said, “A graduation or wedding should be one of the best times of your life. You shouldn’t worry about whether the limo service you hire will get you home safely at the end of the day. My bill will make it easier for safety issues to be reported to the Commissioner of Transportation. We have seen too many preventable tragedies because limousines weren’t well-maintained or regularly inspected. New Yorkers deserve

better oversight.”

Bill Sponsor Senator Jen Metzger, said, “The devastating loss of lives from the 2018 crash in Schoharie was a call to action for stronger laws to keep people safe on our roads. My bill to mandate drug and alcohol testing for limo drivers and other for-hire vehicles, along with the other urgent legislation that we passed today, will save lives and prevent future tragedies. I want to thank Senate Transportation Chair Tim Kennedy for championing this vital package of legislation.”

Bill Sponsor Senator James Sanders, Jr., said, “This bill is important in ensuring the safety of both pedestrians and motorists. It is vital that the DMV have up-to-date records regarding stretch limousine companies and their drivers, especially when it comes to defects and crashes. As we all know a car can be a dangerous weapon if not operated properly, and when we think about vehicles that are even larger like stretch limousines that often transport many people, we have to be even more cautious.”

Senate Deputy Leader Michael Gianaris, said, “After last year's horrifying tragedy touched so many lives - including our own Senate family - the Senate Democratic Majority is taking serious action. This slate of bills will make transportation across New York safer for everyone.”

Senator Joseph P. Addabbo, Jr. said, “I am pleased to join my colleagues in passing a package of comprehensive limousine safety bills. The deadly limousine crash that claimed the lives of 17 passengers, along with the driver and two innocent bystanders, brought to light the urgent need for industry regulation. This legislation will ensure that these vehicles now have sufficient safety features including seat belts and airbags, and the drivers are qualified with proper licensing. Hiring a limousine for special occasions has always been the responsible choice so we must do all we can to ensure it's also the safest option”

Senator Jamaal Bailey, said, “Following the tragic limousine crash that occurred in 2018 in Schoharie, NY, it exposed the lack of safety requirements for limousines. Our priority in the Senate is to ensure that all New Yorkers are safe, I applaud Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins, Transportation Chair Tim Kennedy, and my colleagues for this comprehensive package of bills that expands safety requirements for limousine drivers and passengers. Let’s continue to work to prevent tragedies like the one that occurred in our state.”

Senator David Carlucci, said, “For too long limos did not have to meet stringent safety requirements. Sadly, the result of that we saw in 2018 in Upstate New York when a limo crash left 20 people dead. I am fighting to prevent another tragedy and support legislation to require limos have seat belts for every passenger and that passengers wear them. In addition, when limos are not fit to be on the roadway, they should be impounded. No one should lose a loved one because of deadly gaps in limo-safety standards.”

Senator Simcha Felder, said, “The patchwork of regulations covering the stretch limousine industry has been sorely insufficient for too long. With this set of bills, we correct those devastating gaps and inconsistencies. I applaud my colleagues for enacting these important measures so we can prevent limousine rides in New York State from ending in unnecessary tragedy.”

Senator Andrew Gounardes, said, “I strongly support new safety measures for for-hire vehicles following the tragic and deadly collision that caused the deaths of 20 people in Schoharie, New York. A night of fun should never turn into an unspeakable tragedy, and today we are taking common-sense steps to protect New Yorkers and save lives.”

Senator Pete Harckham, said, “It is well-known that stretch limousines and large for-hire vehicles, many of which are modified after their initial manufacture, are not held to the same safety standards as new vehicles. As recent tragedies have shown, problematic issues

with operators of the vehicles only compound the risks for patrons, which is why this collection of new legislation passed by my Senate colleagues is so necessary. While the for-hire limo industry continues to grow, keeping a closer regulatory eye on the vehicles and operators will be tantamount to saving lives.”

Senator John Liu said, “Today we once again pass a package of bills that bring us a big step closer to making limousines safer. Unfortunately, the limousine safety bills we passed last session did not get beyond the Senate. With this quick repassage, these common sense reforms can and should be enacted into law this year. The families who have advocated tirelessly for these laws, in the wake of their own tragic losses due to limousine crashes, deserve nothing less.”

Senator Kevin Parker said, “It is our job as state legislators to create laws that protect New Yorkers, and the Senate Majority’s legislative package ensures that we are taking the necessary steps to save lives and keep our roads safe. With one of the deadliest transportation related tragedies in the U.S. occurring in New York State and on our roadways, the bills introduced today provide stringent regulations for for-hire vehicles such as requiring the use of seat-belts in limousines. These commonsense changes to our laws that the new Senate Democratic Majority have proposed today will ensure that we do not repeat the unfortunate events that occurred less than two years ago in Schoharie County. I continue to pray for the families impacted, and I remain hopeful for our state as we advance this legislative package that will save lives for many years to come.”

Senator Luis Sepúlveda, said, “This package of life-changing legislation will ensure the necessary improvements to safety standards for the limousine industry. Families have suffered great loss and tragedy due to the lack of safety regulations, which caused the fatal limo accidents. Today we address the dire need to firmly put in place safety standards and oversight that will keep passengers safe in New York State, and I commend my colleagues in

the Senate who have taken significant steps to bring these vital changes to ensure our safety.”

Senator Kevin Thomas, said, “Our communities have suffered greatly in the wake of the fatal limousine crashes in Upstate New York and Long Island. These common-sense safety reforms will help protect our loved ones, prevent future tragedies, and improve the safety of our roads. I am proud to stand with my colleagues in advancing this critical legislation.”

Nancy DiMonte and Paul Schulman, spokespersons for the Long Island Families of Cutchogue limousine crash, said, “It is with great pride that the 8 Long Island families will experience the fruits of their labor. In July 2015, 4 beautiful young women were abruptly taken when a horrific limousine crash devastated the lives of those families along with sympathizers nationwide. That fateful journey seriously injured 4 beautiful young women as well. We worked tirelessly until we penetrated so many minds as we insisted on improvement in safety for the industry and prevention of tragedy due to lack of regulation. This day has come and we are thankful to acknowledge the incredible efforts of Governor Cuomo and his staff, Senator Tim Kennedy’s office and his staff, the entire Senate and William Magnarelli and his staff along with the assembly for a remarkable meeting of the minds. As part of this groundbreaking agreement, the state of New York will be paramount in the institution of limousine safety laws and will indeed set a precedent for the entire country to follow suit. Please accept our humble gratitude and our thanks for allowing us to participate so actively in these deliberations.”

Kevin Cushing, on behalf of the Families of the Schoharie Limousine crash, said, “This past year has been a difficult journey for our collective families. As the saying goes, it’s not where you start, it’s where you finish. As we near the finish line in passing New York State limousine safety legislation, the families would like to thank the Senate and the Assembly (and their staffs) for their dedication and hard work to develop meaningful and enforceable laws that will ultimately make that industry safer, and more importantly, save lives. For the past 16

months, family members have worked hand in glove with both the Senate and Assembly to craft laws that represent a meaningful legacy to those loved ones that were lost to us on October 6, 2018. We can't change the past, but we can make a difference for tomorrow. Our advocacy work will continue as we move forward and work with our federal legislators to pass similar lifesaving legislation in Washington."