

THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
COMMISSION AGAINST DISCRIMINATION
ONE ASHBURTON PLACE, BOSTON, MA 02108-1518



Deval L. Patrick
Governor

Timothy P. Murray
Lieutenant Governor

January 7, 2010

Malcolm S. Medley
Chairman

Martin S. Ebel
Commissioner

Sunila Thomas-George
Commissioner

Letters to the Editor
The Boston Globe
P.O. Box 55819
Boston, MA 02205-5819

Dear Sir/Madam:

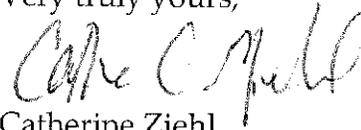
The Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination would like to comment on the letter of Shari Zakim published on January 5, 2010 detailing her most unfortunate experience with a cab driver from Boston Top Cab who refused to provide service to her on New Year's Eve because she uses a wheel chair. It is important for the public to know that Massachusetts law prohibits discrimination in public accommodations, which include common carriers such as taxis, based on a physical or mental disability. Persons with physical disabilities are entitled by law to the full and equal use of a taxicab and no member of the public should be refused transportation solely because he or she uses a wheelchair.

The Massachusetts Legislature created the MCAD for the express purpose of investigating, prosecuting, adjudicating, and eradicating discrimination wherever it is found to exist by imposing civil remedies in such matters. Criminal penalties are also available outside the MCAD. Any person who believes he or she has been discriminated against in a place of public accommodation because of a disability has the right to file a complaint with the Commission.



It is indeed unfortunate that in this day and age, persons with disabilities still find themselves faced with barriers to such everyday activities as basic transportation. It is also sadly ironic that the daughter of Lenny Zakim – a towering figure in the fight for civil rights and equal treatment – was a victim of a discriminatory barrier. However, Ms. Zakim's willingness to publicly discuss her experience will hopefully encourage others to come forward to the MCAD, as we continue to work to ensure the right of all citizens to equal access and treatment in places of public accommodations.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Catherine Ziehl". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being more prominent.

Catherine Ziehl
General Counsel
MCAD