



a message from
TWU LOCAL 100



Marisol Delgado, recovering from injuries suffered in a Sept. 2015 assault

SUBWAYS' 'MOST VULNERABLE' SEEK ASSEMBLY'S HELP BY PETE DONOHUE

Subway cleaners like Myra Toombs may be the most vulnerable transit workers in the system. Cleaners are out in the open while station agents and train crews at least have the protection of a locked booth or train cab. A growing number of bus operators have partitions shielding them from the loons and goons, a security measure provided to thousands of bus operators after one was stabbed to death. But cleaners don't have radios – or even the law on their side – despite the risks.

“We don't have anything,” Toombs, 56, said. “We're just cleaners with our cleaning supplies. It's very fearful. People are crazy out there.”

It was just after midnight in September 2015 when crazy walked into the Bay Ridge Ave. station on the R line. Cleaner Marisol Delgado was getting supplies from a utility room when she heard “hollering and screaming” near the turnstiles. “It was a lady and she was fighting with her boyfriend,” Delgado said. “She wanted him to jump the turnstile because she didn't

have enough money to pay his fare. So, I told her to ‘just go, don't argue with him.’ I was being nice.” The woman responded with curses. After the screaming match continued for another 10 minutes, Delgado finally told the token booth clerk to alert the rail control center. The woman responded with a haymaker.

“I turned back, heading to the room with the cleaning supplies, and she punched me in the forehead,” Delgado said. “I fell. She was ready to hit me again. I ran, dragging myself into the room.”

Delgado suffered bruising and swelling, and a pinched neck nerve, according to the police complaint. She also hurt her thumb pulling the door to the supply room closed, she said.

The assailant fled but was later charged by police with misdemeanor assault. Prosecutors have offered a slap-on-the-wrist plea deal: seven days community service and an order to stay away from Delgado.

Under state law, you can be charged with a felony punishable by years in prison if you

assault a station agent, a subway conductor, a train operator or bus operator. The Legislature granted that “special protected status” more than a decade ago. The goal remains the same – to deter attacks on these important public sector workers, and to allow authorities to impose stiff penalties on those who aren't deterred. Such status was first granted to police officers and firefighters. It has since been expanded to include traffic agents, nurses, paramedics and station agents.

But cleaners have been left out there all by themselves without even the deterrent threat of a punishment greater than picking up litter in the park for a few days to protect them.

TWU Local 100 has tried for years to get cleaners added to the assault bill – and the state Senate passed the necessary legislation just last week. It would be an insult to the men and women who clean the subway if the Assembly didn't follow suit before going home for the summer.

