

BEFORE THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION OF THE STATE OF COLORADO

PROCEEDING NO. 20V-0045CP

IN THE MATTER OF THE PETITION OF PATTI LYNN FEHRMAN FOR A WAIVER OF RULE 6109 (PROOF OF MEDICAL FITNESS) OF THE RULES REGULATING TRANSPORTATION BY MOTOR VEHICLE, 4 CCR 723-6.

**RECOMMENDED DECISION OF
ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
G. HARRIS ADAMS
GRANTING PETITION AND GRANTING
WAIVER, SUBJECT TO CONDITIONS**

Mailed Date: March 16, 2020

I. STATEMENT

1. On January 31, 2020, Patti Lynn Fehrman (Petitioner) filed a verified Petition for Waiver/Variance of Safety Regulations – Drivers of Vehicles with a seating capacity of 15 passengers or less, including the driver (Form PFW-D-15-1, Revised 5/15/2019) (Petition). Petitioner requests a waiver of the specific subparagraph(s) of Rule 6109 of the Commission Rules Regulating Transportation by Motor Vehicle, 4 *Code of Colorado Regulations* (CCR) 723-6: “(IX) – Visual disorder or impairment as defined in 4 CCR 723-6-6109(c)(IX).” Petition at 1. In support, Petitioner filed: (a) a Medical Examination Report Form (Form MCSA-5875); (b) a Medical Examiner’s Certificate (Form MCSA-5876); (c) a Certified Official Driving Record (driving record); and (d) a copy of Petitioner’s Driver License.

2. Petitioner seeks a waiver of Rule 6109(c)(IX) of the Commission Rules Regulating Transportation by Motor Vehicle, 4 CCR 723-6. Petitioner requests a waiver be granted to permit her to drive for a motor carrier because she can safely operate a motor vehicle.

3. On February 13, 2020, this matter was referred to an Administrative Law Judge (ALJ) for disposition by minute entry during the Commission’s Weekly Meeting

4. As explained in greater detail in Decision No. R20-0104-I issued on February 14, 2020, Petitioner was ordered to do the following on or before **close of business on February 28, 2020:**

- a) supplement the petition by filing the Medical Examiner's Certificate/Driver Medical Certification Card” (Version Date May 15, 2018) (available at the Commission’s website); **OR**
- b) supplement the petition by filing a signed and dated letter expressing a qualified medical opinion as to whether he/she feels the driver could safely operate a motor vehicle of the type the driver intends to operate while driving for a common carrier coupled with a short description of the reason for the physical disqualification; **OR**
- c) otherwise show cause why this matter should not be dismissed without prejudice. ¹

5. On February 26, 2020, Petitioner supplemented her petition by filing a letter signed by Eric E. Blom, MD. In the letter, Dr. Blom describes Petitioner’s medical condition and expresses a medical opinion regarding Petitioner’s ability operate a motor vehicle.

6. Rule 6109(a) of the Commission Rules Regulating Transportation by Motor Vehicle, 4 CCR 723-6, provides:

No Motor Carrier shall permit any Driver to drive who is not medically examined and certified.... Drivers of vehicles with a seating capacity of 15 Passengers or less, including the Driver, may be certified under the provisions of this rule [or 49] C.F.R. 391.41, as revised on January 1, 2017.

7. The Commission Rules, however, also provide that a person may petition the Commission for a waiver or variance of any rule in this Part 6. *See* Rules 6003 and 1003 of the

¹ Decision No. R20-0104-I ¶ 8. (Footnote 1 Omitted).

Commission’s Rules of Practice and Procedure, 4 CCR 723-1. In part, Rule 1003 provides that: “[t]he Commission may, for good cause shown, grant waivers or variances from . . . Commission rules In making its determination[,] the Commission may take into account, but is not limited to, considerations of hardship, equity, or more effective implementation of overall policy on an individual basis.” Rule 1003(a), 4 CCR 723-1.

8. The Commission may take evidence in uncontested or unopposed proceedings by affidavit or otherwise, without the necessity of a formal oral hearing. § 40-6-109(5), C.R.S.

9. Rule 1403(a) provides that the Commission may determine a petition without a hearing and without further notice if the application or petition is uncontested or unopposed, if a hearing is not requested or required by law, and if the application or petition is accompanied by a sworn statement verifying sufficient facts and supported by attachments and/or exhibits that adequately support the filing.

10. Here, no one sought to intervene in the proceeding. The Petition is unopposed. Additionally, the Petition is verified by Petitioner and the required documents have been submitted with the Petition. Thus, the Petition shall be considered without a hearing.

11. The Medical Examiner’s Certificate filed with the Petition certifies that Petitioner is medically fit to drive a commercial vehicle only if accompanied by the waiver:

the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations (49 CFR 391.41-391.49) with any applicable State variances (which will only be valid for intrastate operations), and, with knowledge of the driving duties, I find this person is qualified, and, if applicable, only when (check all that apply): . . . Wearing corrective lenses [and] Accompanied by a Vision waiver/exemption²

² Medical Examiner’s Certificate at 1.

12. Rule 49 *Code of Federal Regulations* (C.F.R.) § 391.41(a)(1)(i) states in relevant part: “A person subject to this part must not operate a commercial motor vehicle unless he or she is medically certified as physically qualified to do so” Section 391.41(b)(10) provides that:

[a] person is physically qualified to drive a commercial motor vehicle if that person . . . [h]as distant visual acuity of at least 20/40 (Snellen) in each eye without corrective lenses or visual acuity separately corrected to 20/40 (Snellen) or better with corrective lenses, distant binocular acuity of at least 20/40 (Snellen) in both eyes with or without corrective lenses, field of vision of at least 70° in the horizontal Meridian in each eye, and the ability to recognize the colors of traffic signals and devices showing standard red, green, and amber.

49 C.F.R. 391.41(b)(10).

13. Rule 6109(c), 4 CCR 723-6 similarly provides:

[a] Person is physically qualified to drive if, upon physical examination, the medical examiner determines that the Person does not exhibit any of the following conditions: ...

(IX) visual disorder or impairment resulting in acuity of worse than 20/40 (Snellen) in each eye without corrective lenses or corrected to 20/40 (Snellen) or better with corrective lenses, distant binocular acuity worse than 20/40 (Snellen) in both eyes with or without corrective lenses, field of vision lower than 70° in the horizontal Meridian in each eye, and color blindness resulting in the lack of an ability to recognize the colors of traffic signals and devices showing standard red, green, and amber.

14. The certification in MCSA-5876 transmits driver information for both interstate and intrastate operations, while clearly differentiating on the relevant documentation which standards (interstate or intrastate) are involved. The Medical Examiner did not find Petitioner medically certified to operate in interstate commerce; however, Petitioner would have been medically qualified but for the visual acuity requirements. Thus, upon the Commission granting a state variance of the visual acuity standard, Petitioner would then be medically qualified to drive for intrastate operations only.

15. The Petition requests a waiver of the Commission’s visual acuity standard, based upon grounds stated in the Petition and incorporated herein by reference.

16. A review of Petitioner's driving record gives no indication that her impaired vision has affected the safety of her driving. Granting the waiver is in the public interest in that it keeps a knowledgeable and safe driver on the street for an authorized carrier.

17. The record establishes that: (a) Petitioner's vision is impaired; (b) but for her impaired vision, Petitioner would be found to be medically qualified to drive under the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations (49 C.F.R. 391.41-391.49); (c) strict application of Rule 6109, 4 CCR 723-6, would create a hardship on Petitioner; and (d) granting the requested waiver would not compromise the public safety or the public interest.

18. Based on the record, the ALJ finds and concludes Petitioner has met her burden of proof in this matter and that, subject to conditions on the waiver and exemption, the Petition should be granted. The ALJ finds and concludes that granting the requested waiver subject to the conditions specified below provides reasonable assurances that the health, safety, and welfare of Petitioner's passengers and the public will be protected. Granting the waiver for a two-year period, subject to conditions, has no effect on other medical requirements (*e.g.*, medical examinations).

19. In accordance with § 40-6-109, C.R.S., the Administrative Law Judge recommends that the Commission enter the following order.

II. ORDER

A. The Commission Orders That:

1. Subject to the conditions ordered herein, the Petition for Waiver/Variance of Safety Regulations – Driver, filed by Patti Lynn Fehrman (Petitioner) on January 31, 2020 is granted.

2. Petitioner is granted a waiver of Rule 6109(c)(IX), 4 *Code of Colorado Regulation* 723-6, and is permitted to drive for a motor carrier in intrastate operations only subject to the following conditions:

a) Petitioner shall notify the Commission, in writing and within seven calendar days of the occurrence, if Petitioner is involved in a motor vehicle accident. This reporting requirement applies only to a motor vehicle accident that occurs while Petitioner is driving as a transportation network company driver for hire and applies irrespective of the party at fault for the accident. The written notice shall be in the form of a letter addressed to the Commission's Chief of Transportation;

b) Petitioner shall comply with the Rules Regulating Transportation by Motor Vehicle as they may be applicable to her and with the terms of this Decision; and

c) Petitioner shall only drive a vehicle with a seating capacity of 15 passengers or less, including the driver, as a driver for hire pursuant to this waiver.

3. If this Recommended Decision becomes a decision of the Commission, the waiver and exemption granted by this Decision shall remain in effect for a period of two years from the effective date of this Decision, unless revoked before that date upon notice to Petitioner.

4. This Recommended Decision shall be effective on the day it becomes the Decision of the Commission, if that is the case, and is entered as of the date above.

5. As provided by § 40-6-109, C.R.S., copies of this Recommended Decision shall be served upon the parties, who may file exceptions to it.

a) If no exceptions are filed within 20 days after service or within any extended period of time authorized, or unless the decision is stayed by the Commission

upon its own motion, the recommended decision shall become the decision of the Commission and subject to the provisions of § 40-6-114, C.R.S.

b) If a party seeks to amend, modify, annul, or reverse basic findings of fact in its exceptions, that party must request and pay for a transcript to be filed, or the parties may stipulate to portions of the transcript according to the procedure stated in § 40-6-113, C.R.S. If no transcript or stipulation is filed, the Commission is bound by the facts set out by the administrative law judge and the parties cannot challenge these facts. This will limit what the Commission can review if exceptions are filed.

6. If exceptions to this Decision are filed, they shall not exceed 30 pages in length, unless the Commission for good cause shown permits this limit to be exceeded.

(S E A L)



THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION
OF THE STATE OF COLORADO

G. HARRIS ADAMS

Administrative Law Judge

ATTEST: A TRUE COPY

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Doug Dean".

Doug Dean,
Director