

La Opinión

Plan for ports Program

Bill to expand Los Angeles Clean Truck Program

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WASHINGTON, DC—With the hope that Congress will introduce and approve a proposal to help implement programs to reduce emissions and incidentally, change the circumstances of the current independent contractors, a group of truck drivers from Los Angeles, along with representatives of ports and environmental organizations arrived yesterday to the Capitol.

At the head of the Latino workforce came Jose Covarrubias, who became the first Latino truck driver to testify before Congress at the hearing held by the Subcommittee on Highways and Transit, part of the powerful Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, House of Representatives.

This man began his testimony acknowledging the 70 thousand

truck drivers in the ports who live a situation similar to his. That is, they are classified as “independent contractors”, a situation that keeps them under a system that does not give them any job benefit (such as health insurance) and where they must pay for the rental of trucks registered under the companies that employ them, along with insurance, taxes and fuel, among other expenses.

This has led to weekly checks for just \$ 96 after deductions, financial problems, evictions and the frustration of seeing that despite working 70 hours per week, this does not translate into enough profits to support their families.

“Eventually, I realized that no matter how long or how hard I work, the system is set up so that I pay for the cost of doing business without actually having a business.” said Covarrubias.

The situation of the Latino has become more critical since the implementation of the Los Angeles Clean Truck Program,

which seeks to reduce polluting emissions in the area and places the responsibility of maintaining the vehicles in the hands of the companies.

Also, within the program was a provision that would modify the status of independent contractors. However, the dispute between the American Trucking Association (ATA) and the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach has hindered the full implementation of the initiative.

Rep. Jerrold Nadler (D-NY) intends to introduce legislation in coming days that would give the federal government the power to protect and implement such programs to reduce emissions at ports. A step Covarrubias believes is essential, especially after the legislature would ensure that “the proposal to amend the legislation governing the area (FAAA) and would allow ports around the country to institute programs similar to Los Angeles.