

UZURV

Nicole Rege

General Counsel, UZURV

In Opposition to House Bill 1242

House Environment and Transportation Committee

Chair and Members of the Committee:

My name is Nicole Rege. I am the General Counsel of UZURV, a transportation network company (TNC) that specializes in safe, compliant transportation for seniors and people with disabilities. We operate in partnership with public agencies across the country, including here in Maryland with the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA).

I am writing in opposition to House Bill 1242.

Who UZURV Is – and What We Do Differently

UZURV is not a traditional TNC. We are an adaptive TNC built specifically to serve older adults and riders with disabilities, including ADA paratransit riders.

In Maryland today, UZURV:

- Delivers service within 15 minutes on average
- Achieves 98% on-time performance
- Serves over 10,000 riders monthly
- Supports more than 150,000 rides per month across MTA mobility programs
- Maintains an 82 Net Promoter Score, considered “world class”

UZURV provides the efficiency and cost structure of a TNC model, with room to absorb as many Baltimore Call-A-Ride trips as are needed. But critically, we layer on the safety, compliance, and training standards traditionally associated with paratransit providers.

That includes, among many other things, pre-engagement and random drug and alcohol testing, driver training and company policies on appropriate accommodations, sensitivity, and respectful and courteous treatment of all passengers, including persons with disabilities, as well as **fingerprint-based criminal background checks.**

THE ADAPTIVE TRANSPORTATION NETWORK COMPANY

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What HB 1242 Actually Does

HB 1242 would exempt TNCs under contract with MTA from the current requirement that any driver providing paratransit service undergo state and national fingerprint-based criminal history checks through the Central Repository and the FBI. For TNCs, those fingerprint-based checks are administered by the Maryland Public Service Commission. Instead, this bill would allow those TNCs to rely solely on annual background screenings that meet Public Utilities Article § 10-404(b)(2) — meaning **name-based database checks conducted by consumer reporting agencies**.

The bill also exempts required driver training on appropriate accommodations, including customer service, sensitivity, and respectful and courteous treatment of all passengers, including persons with disabilities.

This is not modernization. It is a reduction in safety standards.

The Difference Between DOJ Fingerprint-Based Checks and Name-Based Checks

Name-based checks simply are not sufficient when dealing with government-provided transportation services to vulnerable populations. This is the same reason that the state of Maryland does not settle for name-based commercial checks for school employees (or anyone with unsupervised access to children), public transit operators, driving school instructors, security guards, and more.

Name-Based Background Checks:

- Search commercial databases
- Depend on matching name and date of birth provided by the driver
- Do not reliably capture alias name use
- Do not guarantee fingerprint-validated criminal records
- Are only as complete as the reporting jurisdiction

Under current TNC law, operators must pass a “Multi-State Multi-Jurisdiction Criminal Records Database Search” and sex offender registry search. That is what HB 1242 would rely on.

These are not the same as fingerprint-based criminal history checks.

DOJ/FBI Fingerprinting:

- Uses biometric identifiers
- Confirms identity of the driver through fingerprints
- Pulls directly from state and federal criminal history repositories
- Eliminates alias confusion or obfuscation
- Captures records that commercial database checks miss

Fingerprinting is not symbolic. It is a materially more accurate identity verification system. The [California Public Utilities Commission \(CPUC\) took up this very issue in 2024](#) when Uber sought to remove fingerprinting requirements that applied to their Uber Teen product. Once the CPUC declined to adopt Uber's proposal and kept fingerprint requirements in place, Uber Teen stopped operations in the state.

When TNCs, or other private operators under contract, are standing in the shoes of public transit agencies transporting vulnerable populations, including seniors with cognitive disabilities, veterans with mobility impairments, dialysis and chemotherapy patients, among others, we should not lower the bar on who we permit to serve them.

The Real-World Risk of Lowering TNC Oversight

Recent reporting has documented systemic safety issues within large national TNC platforms.

A January 2026 New York Times investigation found that Uber received reports of sexual assault or sexual misconduct almost every eight minutes between 2017 and 2022 – far more than publicly disclosed.

The reporting further noted that Uber's background checks approved drivers with criminal convictions and allowed drivers with prior complaints to continue driving until serious incidents occurred.

Separately, the United States Department of Justice has filed suit against Uber for systemic violations of the ADA, alleging a pattern or practice of discrimination against riders with disabilities, including service animal refusals and improper fees. The complaint details repeated service denials, improper surcharges and cancellation fees, failure to train drivers adequately, and a failure to ensure reasonable modifications.

Maryland should not move in the opposite direction of heightened oversight.

TNCs Can Meet These Standards – Because We Already Do

UZURV proves that a TNC model **can**:

- Conduct DOJ fingerprint-based criminal background checks (through the system already in place through the MD PSC)
- Conduct FTA-compliant drug and alcohol screening
- Provide disability sensitivity training
- Monitor motor vehicle records continuously
- Provide door-to-door assistance to riders
- Enforce zero tolerance for guide dog refusals

Again, innovation does not require lowering safety standards.

The Policy Question Before You

The question is not whether TNCs should participate in paratransit.

They already do.

The question is whether Maryland should maintain fingerprint-verified identity checks and disability sensitivity training for drivers serving vulnerable riders or allow large national platforms to operate under lower screening standards.

Maryland is currently a leader in adaptive TNC integration.

HB 1242 would reverse that.

We respectfully urge an unfavorable report.

Thank you for your time and your commitment to protecting Maryland's most vulnerable riders.

Many thanks,

/s/ Nicole Rege

Nicole Rege
General Counsel, UZURV



PRESS RELEASE

Justice Department Sues Uber for Denying Rides to Passengers with Service Dogs, Wheelchairs

Friday, September 12, 2025

For Immediate Release

Office of Public Affairs

Yesterday, the Justice Department filed a lawsuit against Uber Technologies Inc. for discriminating against passengers with disabilities, including those who use service animals and mobility devices such as stowable wheelchairs. Uber is the largest provider of ride-hailing services in the United States. The lawsuit seeks \$125 million for individuals who have been subject to discrimination and previously submitted complaints to Uber or the Department.

The lawsuit, filed in the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California, alleges Uber violated Title III of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which prohibits discrimination based on disability by private transportation companies like Uber. The ADA also requires Uber to allow service animals to accompany individuals with disabilities in vehicles and to provide rides to, and assist, riders with stowable wheelchairs and mobility devices.

The Department's civil complaint alleges that Uber and its drivers routinely refuse to serve individuals with disabilities; impose impermissible surcharges by charging cleaning fees for service animal shedding and cancellation fees to riders whom Uber has unlawfully denied service; and refuse to reasonably modify Uber's policies, practices, or procedures, where necessary, to avoid discriminating against riders with disabilities, including by denying individuals with mobility disabilities the option to sit in the front seat when needed. Due to

Uber's ride denials, individuals with disabilities have experienced significant delays, missed appointments, and have been left stranded in inclement weather.

“For too long, blind riders have suffered repeated ride denials by Uber because they are traveling with a service dog,” said Assistant Attorney General Harmeet K. Dhillon of the Justice Department’s Civil Rights Division. “This lawsuit seeks to end this persistent discrimination and allow riders with disabilities to use Uber. We will enforce the ADA’s guarantee that people with disabilities have equal opportunity and full participation in all aspects of American society, including transportation.”

“Rideshare companies like Uber are prohibited from denying riders with disabilities the same access to transportation that riders without disabilities enjoy,” said U.S. Attorney Craig H. Missakian of the Northern District of California. “This complaint underscores the United States’ commitment to enforcing the ADA’s promise of equal access.”

The lawsuit seeks a court order to force Uber to stop discriminating against individuals with disabilities, to modify its policies to comply with the ADA, and to train its staff and drivers on the ADA. In addition to the monetary damages to compensate aggrieved individuals subjected to Uber’s discrimination, the lawsuit demands that Uber pay a civil penalty to vindicate the public’s interest in eliminating disability discrimination.

To learn more about the Civil Rights Division visit www.justice.gov/crt, and to report possible violations of federal civil rights laws go to www.civilrights.justice.gov. For more information on the ADA, please call the department’s toll-free ADA Information Line at 800-514-0301 (TTY 1-833-610-1264) or visit www.ada.gov.

Updated January 14, 2026

Topics

CIVIL RIGHTS

DISABILITY RIGHTS

Components

[Civil Rights Division](#) | [Civil Rights-Disability Rights Section](#) | [USAO - California, Northern](#)

Press Release Number: 25-943

Uber Faces Growing Pressure Over Sexual Assault Record

From the ballot box in California to the halls of Congress and Wall Street, several new initiatives would require more oversight of how the company protects its passengers.



Listen to this article · 5:27 min [Learn more](#)



By Emily Steel

Jan. 21, 2026

Uber faces mounting scrutiny across the country as lawmakers, investors and others move to hold the ride-hailing giant accountable for a pervasive pattern of sexual violence during rides.

In California, a proposed ballot initiative would make ride-hailing companies legally responsible for sexual misconduct and assault against drivers and passengers. On Wall Street, the New York State comptroller is leading a shareholder push for Uber's board to release a "transparency report" detailing its oversight of passenger safety.

And in Washington, Representative Debbie Dingell of Michigan sent a letter to Dara Khosrowshahi, Uber's chief executive, denouncing the company for prioritizing its "bottom line" over safety. Ms. Dingell, a Democrat, said in an interview that she wanted to hold a congressional hearing and explore legislation on the issue.

All three actions cite New York Times reporting that found Uber received a report of sexual assault or sexual misconduct in the United States almost every eight minutes on average between 2017 and 2022 — far more than what the company has publicly disclosed. Uber executives have long been aware of the extensiveness of sexual violence, The Times found, yet they repeatedly prioritized expanding their business over introducing stronger protections.

The Times also found that Uber's background checks approved drivers with many types of criminal convictions, and that the company allowed many drivers with records of complaints to keep driving — until passengers accused them of serious sexual assault.

“There is no trade-off that should be acceptable to Uber, considering the devastating impact of sexual assault,” Ms. Dingell said in the letter.





Representative Debbie Dingell in Ann Arbor, Mich., on Sunday. Peter Hoffman for The New York Times

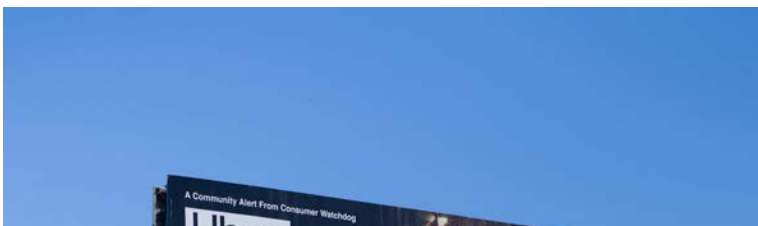
Uber has said it is one of the safest ways to get around, with the vast majority of its trips in the United States — 99.9 percent — occurring without an incident of any kind.

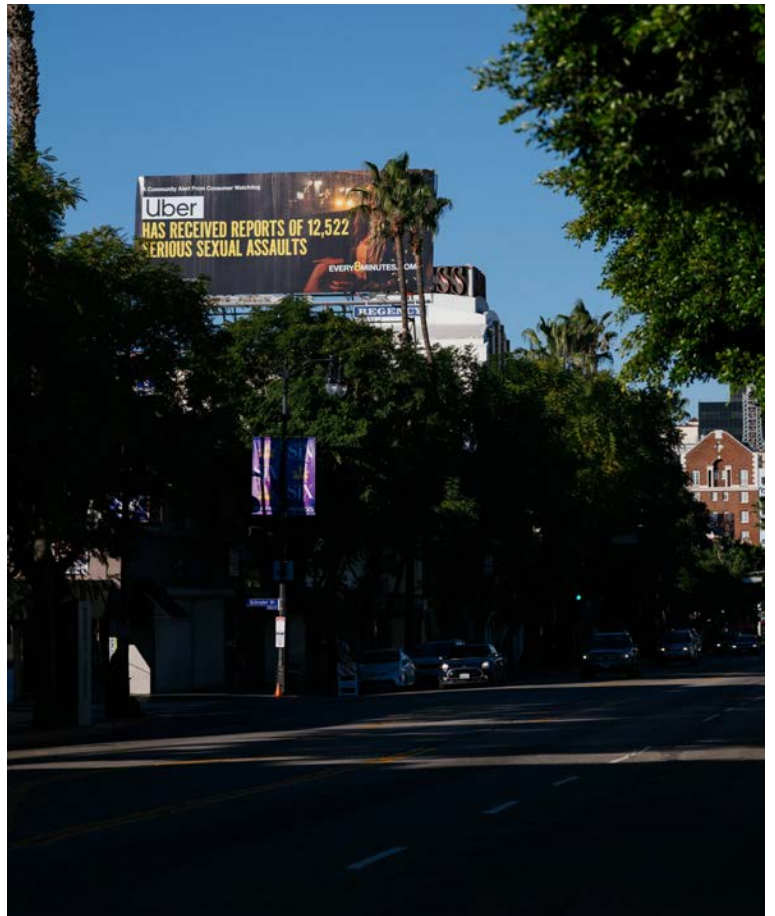
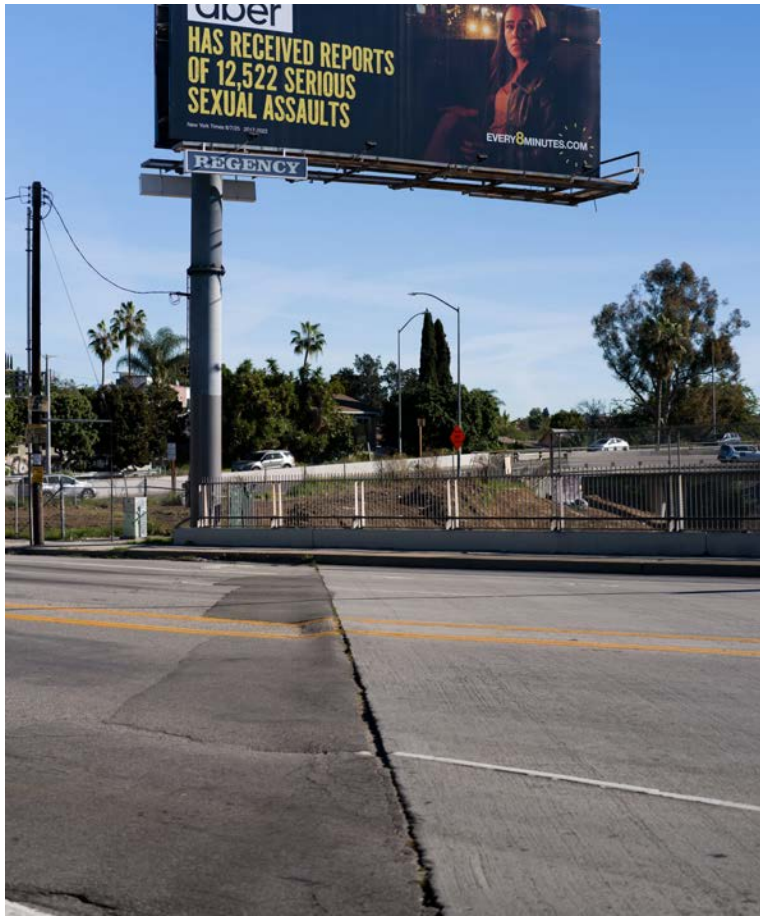
Matt Kallman, an Uber spokesman, said in a statement that the company had had “several constructive meetings” with Ms. Dingell and her staff and would “continue to answer any of their questions about our approach to safety.”

He described the California proposal as a “retaliatory measure” from the Consumer Attorneys of California, a lobbying group, in response to a separate ballot initiative from Uber that would limit how much automobile accident victims could receive via litigation for their medical expenses, and how much attorneys could earn in fees for those cases.

Mr. Kallman said Uber had been “exceptionally transparent about safety on our platform” and had released three safety reports that detailed serious incidents during rides, but he added that the company “will continue to engage with the comptroller’s office on their proposal ahead of our shareholder meeting later this year.”

This wave of attention compounds existing pressure on Uber, which already has faced a consumer fraud investigation by New Jersey’s attorney general and a separate inquiry by a House oversight subcommittee into its sexual assault safety protocols.







Billboards at several locations around Los Angeles. Tag Christof for The New York Times

The company is also fighting more than 3,000 lawsuits in federal and state courts from passengers who claim that they were sexually assaulted or harassed by Uber drivers.

Many of those lawsuits were consolidated in federal court, which allows for certain procedural matters from similar cases to be presented before the same judge while each case is tried individually. The first trial in those proceedings began in Phoenix this month.

Uber has argued that it is not responsible for the misconduct of its drivers, whom it considers independent contractors rather than employees.

The verdict could affect how the other cases play out. In a trial in California state court in September, the jury found that Uber was not responsible for a sexual assault that a woman said she experienced during a 2016 ride.

The ballot initiative concerning sexual assault would make Uber liable for the misconduct of its drivers, regardless of their status as contractors. The measure was cleared this month for circulation; if it gains enough signatures to reach the state ballot in November and wins approval, it will reclassify ride-hailing companies as “common carriers” — the same legal category as taxis and trains — which would require them to protect passengers and warn them of known dangers.

The law also would require ride-hailing companies to publish monthly reports on sexual misconduct and sexual assaults, and notify passengers of a driver's known risks before they accept a ride. And it would mandate fingerprinting for prospective drivers, a measure Uber has long lobbied against.

The Consumer Attorneys of California said it had raised more than \$50 million for this and two other ballot measures as part of its fight against the Uber-backed initiative.

Mr. Kallman described Uber's proposal as "seeking to limit the amount attorneys can collect from people injured in car crashes."

"We believe Californians deserve a system that prioritizes victims over billboard lawyers," he added.

Nicholas Rowley, a lawyer involved in the Consumer Attorneys of California effort, said Uber was trying to shift the narrative away from its sexual assault problem. "It's a long time coming," he said. "Uber's known, and Uber's done nothing, so it will be a righteous, justified law."

Maryland is Already a Leader for Paratransit

Oppose HB 1242/SB 786 “Transportation of Persons with Disabilities - Transportation Network Companies - Requirements”

HB 1242 / SB 786 would allow Transportation Network Companies (TNC) provide paratransit service without being fingerprinted, or completing coursework on sensitive service for riders of all abilities. This will allow Uber and Lyft to provide rides for paratransit riders without meeting the current basic safety requirements for fingerprint background checks and disability sensitivity training, which ensures a proper response to service animals, door-to-door assistance when requested, and other measures to provide safe, compliant rides.



This is a bill in search of a problem. Maryland already uses TNCs successfully for paratransit, and UZURV is one of many that fingerprints drivers.

The benefits of TNC service for paratransit riders is already happening without compromising on key safety and accessibility measures. For the MTA Call-a-Ride program it means reliable, and on-demand UZURV rides that arrive within minutes, without removing safety and accessibility requirements.



UZURV Service in Maryland by the Numbers



98%
On-time
Performance

Within 15 minutes.
Safe, compliant driver arrival
time from ride request.

82
Rider Net
Promoter Score
(A "World Class" score)



150,000+
Rides per Month for
10,000+ Riders
Across all MTA Mobility and
Call-a-Ride Programs

Why would Maryland lower safety standards, when the program is already successful?



Removing Fingerprinting Will Lower Overall TNC Standards and Accessibility Features

TNCs can and some do require fingerprinting, including MTA's current provider.

- **Why compromise on safety?** DOJ Fingerprinting is a more comprehensive background check, and is one Uber and Lyft avoid through waivers. **Prospective drivers who pass name-based checks are regularly disqualified by the Maryland Public Service Commission based on their fingerprint results.**
- Adaptive TNCs, like UZURV, provide all the cost-savings of a TNC, while adapting the model to safeguard and serve those citizens with safety measures and sensitive service for ADA paratransit service.
- By waiving the fingerprinting requirements, Maryland would also open the door to remove other safety and accessibility features of an Adaptive TNC:

MARYLAND SERVICE REQUIREMENTS	TRADITIONAL TNCs	UZURV
FTA-compliant drug & alcohol screening (pre-engagement, incident, and random)	NO	YES
DOJ Fingerprinting	NO	YES
Training on the appropriate, courteous and respectful treatment of all passengers, including persons with disabilities.	NO	YES
Motor vehicle record monitoring by staff (pre-and ongoing)	YES	YES
Passage of DOT Physical/Medical exam	NO	YES
Paratransit industry education standards (PASS equivalent)	NO	YES
Rider assistance upon request, including Door-to-Door Service	NO	YES
Wheelchair accessible vehicles	NO	YES
Pay fare with cash (where allowed by law)	NO	YES
Pay fare with serialized coupons or paper tickets	NO	YES
Riders have an accessible call center option to book and manage rides	NO	YES
Credit/debit card needed to ride	YES	NO
Published and immediately enforced Zero-Tolerance Policy for Guide-Dog Ride Refusals	NO	YES

UZURV has the proven capacity to scale-up to meet rider demand having managed an 21.5X increase in rider volume since 2022.

Recent New York Times reporting found that **“Uber received a report of sexual assault or sexual misconduct in the United States almost every eight minutes on average between 2017 and 2022.”** When other states are considering strengthening TNC rider protections in response to reports of widespread assaults, and revelations of gaps in safety and oversight protocols, and service animal denials, Maryland should not be exposing its potentially vulnerable paratransit riders to the same types of concerns, nor itself to the liability of reducing protections for its riders.

Oppose HB 1242/SB 786 and preserve Maryland’s standards that already serve over 1.5 million on-demand paratransit trips each year.