

*I use ride shares a lot. As I write this, I've taken 669 Uber rides and 567 Lyft rides. By the time you read this, I will have taken more. RTD's Access On Demand program has made ride shares affordable to me, and ride share has dramatically increased my ability to access parts of the Denver Metro Area that are not served by bus routes, where I am not familiar with the area and its bus routes, and where it takes too many buses and too much time for me to travel by bus. For example, it requires 2 buses and over, over an hour, and a walk of about a mile with 2 unprotected and dangerous street crossings for me to get to work. I love where I work and it's important for me to have a job, and ride share has significantly increased my ability to travel to and from work.*

*Despite what ride share has meant to me, I've also encountered significant discrimination from many ride share drivers. The majority of drivers give me no problem at all or even welcome me into their car, but far more often than I like to think about, I encounter blatant discrimination. I have a service dog, a guide dog named Lotus. She is a small yellow lab who often wears a set of purple pajamas with flying pigs, along with her guide dog harness and head collar. I am also visibly blind in that my eyelids do not work and I am not able to open them. Sometimes drivers arrive, see me, and drive away without speaking to me. Other times, they stop, tell me they are not a pet ride and that I need to order a pet ride. I explain that my dog is a service dog, not a pet, and that according to federal and state law and the ride share policy, I get to ride in any car like any other passenger. They refuse, and I tell them I will report them to the ride share company. I then have to make a report explaining the situation. When I report a problem to Uber, I often receive 2-3 calls from Uber within the next 24 hours, re-establishing the details I already described in my initial report. They then tell me their policy and that they will handle the situation. I have no idea what they actually do or do not do. I have asked for a follow up, but I've been told they cannot tell me. If I miss the phone calls or am not able to speak at that time, I do not get a chance to repeat the details. In that case, I especially do not know what happens. I have tried following up by replying to the email, but I do not get a response. I have email records of this.*

*I've received additional fees for having a dog, and Uber has not corrected this. For example, one time a driver wanted to put down a cover on his car seat before my dog and I got in. That's fine, but we passed the time for the ride to begin, and I was charged for the ride that I never received. I tried to get Uber to correct this, but the initial conversation was never completely resolved, and a fee still is recorded on my ride history. The driver was at fault for the ride not starting on time and it was because of my dog. I explained that my dog stays on the floor, but he still wanted to put the cover on his seat.*

*I've received a ride from a driver who put down a cover that made it so I couldn't access the seat belt. I had to take the ride without a seatbelt. There was no follow up from the company.*

*The discrimination I encounter is an extra burden in my life. I always feel some level of anxiety when I order a ride, not sure how the encounter will go. At times, the anxiety has become high enough that I choose not to go out over potentially dealing with discrimination.*

*I suspect there are ways to better inform drivers as to their responsibility to provide rides to everyone. Anecdotally, I've noticed that I have better luck with drivers from Lyft than with drivers using Uber. I'm not sure how the onboarding or education processes differ between the companies, but it seems that Lyft drivers are better informed, even though drivers often use both platforms. However, I have no control over what the companies do. What this bill would do for me is give me another tool to fight the discrimination I deal with. There would still be an extra burden on me, but it would provide extra motivation to the ride share companies to improve the service provided by their drivers.*

*Thank you for listening to my story.*