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CONTACT:
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MEDIA

Dave Sutton
dsutton@melwoodglobal.com
(301) 873-2393

Houston White Paper Blasts Uber, Lyft Background Checks

Report Cites TNC-Approved Drivers With Criminal Histories of Aggravated Robbery, Assault, Indecent Exposure, Fraud and More

Amid revelations that a Houston Uber driver accused of raping a passenger served 14 years in federal prison, the [City of Houston's Administration & Regulatory Affairs Department has issued a scathing white paper criticizing Uber's and Lyft's background checks](#), contrasting them to the far more reliable criminal background checks conducted by the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

The City of Houston conducted criminal background checks on drivers *already approved* to drive for Uber and Lyft, the white paper says. Houston's fingerprint-based, FBI-conducted background checks found TNC-approved drivers had prior criminal histories including indecent exposure, DWI, possession of a controlled substance, prostitution, fraud, battery, assault, robbery, aggravated robbery, possession of marijuana, theft, sale of alcohol to a minor, traffic of counterfeit goods, trademark counterfeit, possession of narcotics and driving with a suspended license.

The revelations come as Uber, an international corporation headquartered in the Netherlands, and its competitor Lyft are spending upwards of [\\$1 million on lobbyists in Texas](#) seeking statewide legislation that would bypass any safety oversight by cities such as Houston.

Similar to Credit Checks, Lacking Fingerprint-Based Identifiers

The white paper states that Uber's and Lyft's background check companies, Hirease and Sterling Infosystems, are functioning more as credit checks than criminal background searches. That's because, the report says, Uber's and Lyft's checks rely solely on names, social security numbers, past counties of residence and voter records, rather than fingerprints, opening up the door to fraud and fake identities.

For example, a recent Uber driver cleared by Uber's screening company Hirease had 24 alias names, five separate birth dates, 10 different social security numbers, and an active warrant for arrest when checked by the FBI.

The report says Hirease itself admits fingerprint-based checks are more secure because "fingerprinting helps uncover criminal history not discovered through traditional means, offers extra protection to aid in meeting industry guidelines, and helps prevent fraud" (www.hirease.com/fingerprinting).

Uber and Lyft Don't Conduct "National" Background Checks

Hirease is the company that performs background checks for Uber. Sterling Infosystems is the company that does the same for Lyft. Both companies have gaps in states they are able to search, the report says:

- Hirease’s “national criminal search” (Uber) does not include Delaware, Massachusetts, South Dakota and Wyoming.
- Sterling Infosystems’ “state criminal records search” does not cover California, Louisiana, Mississippi or Wyoming.

“Houston is absolutely right to raise the alarm over Uber’s and Lyft’s inadequate background checks,” said Dave Sutton, spokesperson for the ‘Who’s Driving You?’ campaign. “These corporations are routinely underinvesting in proper criminal background checks. Cities have every right to say, ‘Enough is enough,’ and put these companies on notice that safety, not corporate business profits, comes first.”

ABOUT US:

‘Who’s Driving You?’ is a public-safety campaign designed to educate the public about the dangers of unlicensed transportation companies. It is an initiative of the Taxicab, Limousine & Paratransit Association, an international non-profit trade association whose membership consists of 1,100 licensed transportation companies. For more information, visit www.WhosDrivingYou.org, follow us on Twitter (@WhosDrivingYou) and follow us on Facebook (facebook.com/WhosDrivingYou)

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