



March 18, 2025

The Honorable Robert Britto  
Chair, Senate Committee on Commerce  
Rhode Island State House  
Providence, RI 02903

Re: Senate Bill 598

Dear Chair Britto and Distinguished Members of the Committee:

Uber Technologies Inc. appreciates the opportunity to voice our strong opposition to SB 598. While safety is a top priority at Uber, implementing fingerprint-based background checks for Transportation Network Company (TNC) drivers in Rhode Island would not enhance safety measures. Instead, it would introduce unnecessary obstacles, reinforce systemic disparities, and make Rhode Island the only state in the nation to adopt an ineffective and flawed approach to background screenings.

At Uber, safety is deeply embedded in our platform. We leverage cutting-edge technology, continuous monitoring, and feedback-driven improvements to ensure the highest level of security for riders and drivers alike. Our existing background check process is already rigorous, fair, and relevant. Before an individual can drive with Uber in Rhode Island, they must undergo a thorough screening process that includes:

- Submission of their full name, date of birth, Social Security number, driver's license details, and vehicle documentation.
- A comprehensive background check conducted by a **third-party provider accredited by the Professional Background Screening Association**—one that reviews national, state, and local databases, as well as court records.

Furthermore, Uber doesn't just conduct one-time screenings. **We go beyond industry standards** by proactively rerunning criminal and motor vehicle background checks annually—regardless of legal requirements. Since 2018, we have invested in **advanced continuous screening technology**, which actively monitors for new criminal offenses. If a driver is charged with a disqualifying offense, they are immediately blocked from the platform, ensuring real-time accountability.

## The Flaws and Risks of Fingerprint-Based Background Checks

Mandating fingerprint-based background checks is not only **ineffective** but also inherently flawed. Here's why:

### 1. Inaccurate and Incomplete Records

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- The FBI's Interstate Identification Index (III), used for fingerprint-based background checks, is riddled with **significant data gaps**. Many state criminal history repositories fail to include final case dispositions, meaning arrests—even those that never resulted in a conviction—can unfairly impact applicants.
- A 2016 study by SEARCH (the national consortium for justice information and statistics) revealed that in 30 states, fewer than 80% of arrest records included final dispositions. Shockingly, some states reported **less than 50% accuracy**, leaving individuals at risk of being judged on incomplete information.

## 2. Discriminatory Consequences

- The reliance on flawed fingerprint databases **disproportionately harms** communities of color, particularly Black Americans, who face higher arrest rates but are no more likely to be convicted than their white counterparts.
- Because these checks often require individuals to obtain proof that they were not convicted, they **create an undue burden**, forcing applicants to track down records from courthouses, prosecutor's offices, or law enforcement agencies—sometimes in different states.

## 3. Failure to Capture Critical Criminal Events

- Fingerprint-based systems often exclude non-custodial arrests, such as those initiated via citations, summons, or warrants—meaning they **miss serious offenses** that Uber's background check system would catch.
- As a stark example, Virginia's state database was found to be missing over 750,000 records, including more than 300 murder convictions, 1,300 rape convictions, and 4,600 felony assault convictions. This issue is not unique to Virginia; it plagues state repositories across the country and affects the FBI's centralized system as well.

## Rhode Island Should Not Adopt a Broken System

Rather than adopting an unreliable and biased fingerprint-based system, Rhode Island should continue embracing **modern, technology-driven background checks** that are **accurate, proactive, and continually updated**—like the ones Uber already implements.

We urge this committee to carefully consider the unintended negative consequences of SB 598. Rhode Island has the opportunity to **set the standard for fair and effective screening policies**, rather than becoming an outlier by adopting an outdated and flawed approach.

Thank you for your leadership and commitment to safety. We look forward to working together on solutions that truly protect Rhode Island's residents while ensuring fair opportunities for drivers.

*Katie Franger, Uber Technologies, Inc.*