



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Susan Serino

## LAWMAKERS URGE GOVERNOR TO ACT QUICKLY TO SIGN BILL PREVENTING SEX OFFENDERS FROM DRIVING FOR UBER AND LYFT

SUSAN SERINO June 20, 2017

| ISSUE: **LAWMAKERS URGE GOVERNOR TO ACT QUICKLY TO SIGN BILL PREVENTING SEX OFFENDERS FROM DRIVING FOR UBER AND LYFT**



ALBANY, NY — With legislation already signed by the Governor to allow ride-hailing companies to operate statewide as early as next week, a group of lawmakers today led by Senators Tom Croci (R, C, I—Sayville), Sue Serino (R, C, I—Hyde Park) Assemblyman Joe Lentol (D—North Brooklyn) and Dean Murray (R-C-I-Reform, East Patchogue), urged the

Executive to sign their bill that would prevent sex offenders from driving for companies like Uber and Lyft.

**Senator Tom Croci stated,** *“A gross oversight has been corrected. We must thoroughly screen individuals who are driving the people we care for. Ensuring sex offenders will not be behind the wheel of a vehicle driving New Yorkers is something I have been proud to fight to make happen. I urge the Governor to immediately sign this bill into law so riders are protected during the summer season.”*

*“Ride-hailing is a business built on trust. Consumers place their trust in these companies and their drivers to get them safely to their destinations,” said Senator Sue Serino. “To think that consumers could unknowingly get into the private vehicle of a registered sex offender because of a loophole in the New York State law is unconscionable. I am proud to have partnered with Senator Croci to pass legislation that keeps sex offenders from preying on vulnerable New Yorkers, and I urge the Governor to sign the bill into law so that it may take effect immediately.”*

*“Safety is paramount. We must ensure that an individual feels safe when they enter a ride-sharing vehicle,” said Assemblyman Joseph R. Lentol. “By banning sex offenders from driving on ride-sharing apps we can protect many more New Yorkers, especially when they are by themselves and at their most vulnerable.”*

**Assemblyman Dean Murray said,** *“It was imperative to get this bill passed before the end of session to ensure this dangerous loophole was closed before these ride sharing services were put into service throughout the state. I commend my colleagues for working together to put the safety of our residents ahead of the potential for revenue.”*

In this year’s State Budget, ride-hailing services won the approval necessary to begin operating across New York State. While the new law included a requirement for background checks on prospective drivers, a loophole in the legislation would allow Level 1 registered sex offenders to obtain the permits necessary to drive for these companies, potentially putting the public at risk.

Specifically, the law that was passed authorizing ride-hailing companies to operate beyond New York City requires potential drivers to obtain a Transportation Network Company (TNC) Driver permit. Individuals found on the U.S. Department of Justice National Sex

Offender Public Website are expressly prohibited from receiving that permit. However, the database only lists those who are designated as Levels 2 and 3 sex offenders in New York, and omits those designated as Level 1 offenders.

As written, the law only prohibits the issuance of a TNC driver permit to those Level 1 offenders who have been convicted of a sex offense in the last seven years. However, the NYS Sex Offender Registration Act (SORA) requires that Level 1 offenders register with law enforcement for a 20-year period due to the continued risk they pose to our communities. As a result, the law allows Level 1 offenders to receive a permit—and drive members of the community around in their personal vehicles—a full thirteen years before they come off of the sex offender registry.

Senator Tom Croci and Senator Sue Serino (R, C, I—Hyde Park), along with Assemblyman Dean Murray, originally introduced legislation to close the dangerous loophole and better protect riders in communities across the state by ensuring that a registered offender is expressly prohibited from receiving a TNC Driver Permit during the entire period that they are registered as a sex offender.

The need to ensure that the bill passed before the close of this legislative session became especially clear after the legislature approved and the Governor signed into law, a bill that would fast-track the implementation of ride-hailing, allowing companies to operate as early as June 29, 2017. With that start-date looming, the bill gained a Majority sponsor in Assemblyman Lentol and passed in both houses of the Legislature today.

Following the passage of the bill, a bi-partisan group of lawmakers, urged the Governor to make signing the legislation a priority before the authorizing law takes effect to ensure that no registered sex offender has the opportunity to exploit the loophole and jeopardize public safety.

*Laura Ahearn, Executive Director of the Crime Victims Center/Parents for Megan's Law, echoed the call saying, "Under New York's Megan's Law, Level 1 offenders are required to register for a minimum of 20 years, so arbitrarily allowing sex offenders to obtain permits for driving for these companies after just seven years places passengers at great risk and gives the public a false sense of security. We thank these lawmakers for acting swiftly to remedy this dangerous discrepancy and urge the Governor to make this bill a priority to be signed ahead of June 29th to prevent sex offenders from taking advantage of vulnerable riders."*

If the Governor signs the bill, it will take effect immediately.

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#### RELATED LEGISLATION

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### **2017-S6782**

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- Introduced
  
- ○ In Committee Assembly
  - In Committee Senate
  
- ○ On Floor Calendar Assembly
  - On Floor Calendar Senate
  
- ○ Passed Assembly
  - Passed Senate

- Delivered to Governor
- Signed By Governor
- 

Relates to criminal history of transportation network drivers and juvenile justice

June 16, 2017

Signed by Governor

Sponsored by **Thomas D. Croci**

Do you support this bill?