

FREEDOM FROM RELIGION *foundation*

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SENT VIA EMAIL & U.S. MAIL: tteas@lyft.com, eburdullis@lyft.com

Taylor Teas
Director, Customer Cares
150 2nd Avenue North
Nashville, TN 37201

Eric Burdullis
Vice President Customer Experience & Trust
150 2nd Avenue North
Nashville, TN 37201

Re: Drivers utilizing Lyft to advance their ministries

Dear Ms. Teas and Mr. Burdullis:

We are writing on behalf of the Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF) to raise concerns about Lyft drivers using your platform to advance their religious mission, to the detriment of your riders. FFRF is a national nonprofit organization with more than 39,000 members across the country. Our purposes are to protect the constitutional principle of separation between state and church and to educate the public on matters relating to nontheism. We write to formally urge that Lyft change its policies to prohibit drivers from forcing their personal religious views upon unsuspecting customers.

It appears that for years, some pastors have been taking advantage of ridesharing services like Uber and Lyft to proselytize unsuspecting riders. A recent article from the Associated Press has detailed multiple drivers who are explicitly exploiting their position at Lyft for the purpose of spreading their religion — e.g., haranguing a captive (and paying) audience with the drivers' personal religious views.¹ Many riders have questioned these practices and what they should do when it occurs. The article points out that Lyft's guidelines do not expressly prohibit evangelism or forced conversations about religion, yet this is not a situation that paying customers should be forced to wrestle with.

We recognize that the topic of religion may sometimes come up innocently in casual conversation. That is a far cry from the situation described by the Associated Press, involving calculating individuals who drive for Lyft with the explicit intention of targeting its riders for missionizing. No one should have to pay to be missionized against their will.

Lyft “commits to maintaining an inclusive and welcoming community.”² Non-religious and minority religious riders do not feel included or welcomed when they are confronted with proselytizing while stuck in a moving vehicle with a driver preaching at them. Lyft has acknowledged that its drivers cannot discriminate based on religion, but if its drivers are

¹<https://www.nbcnewyork.com/news/national-international/roving-preachers-lyft-drivers-spread-the-gospel-with-ride-hailing-ministries/3965751/>

²<https://help.lyft.com/hc/e/all/articles/115012923767-Anti-Discrimination-Policies>

welcome to inquire into and challenge the beliefs of its riders, there is bound to be discrimination and harassment.

Nonreligious or minority religion Lyft users should not be made to feel excluded, or like outsiders because a Lyft driver is allowed to push personal religious beliefs upon passengers. Currently, about three-in-ten U.S. adults (29 percent) are religious “nones” — people who describe themselves as atheists, agnostics or “nothing in particular” when asked about their religious identity.³ More than a third of the population falls into one of these two categories and that’s a lot of people to offend. Furthermore, many such individuals will feel literally unsafe when they are at the mercy of a driver more interested in converting them or denigrating their nonbeliefs, than in offering them professional transportation. Such ranting is a distraction and potential traffic hazard. Minimally, they may feel they must humor or placate the driver who is disrespecting their views. At worst, they may feel personally threatened or be in jeopardy if they express disagreement.

We request that Lyft uphold its commitment to maintaining an inclusive and welcoming community by implementing clear policies prohibiting its drivers from proselytizing, preaching, or otherwise utilizing its services to advance their personal religious viewpoints.

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter. We would appreciate hearing back from you at your earliest notice about this important matter.

Very truly,



Dan Barker and Annie Laurie Gaylor
Co-Presidents
Freedom From Religion Foundation

ALG/DB:cal

³ Gregory A. Smith, About Three-in-Ten U.S. Adults Are Now Religiously Unaffiliated, Pew Research Center (Dec. 14, 2021), available at www.pewforum.org/2021/12/14/about-three-in-ten-u-s-adults-are-now-religiously-unaffiliated/.