

An Open Letter to Uber CEO Dara Khosrowshahi
By Ralph Nader

June 4, 2026

Dara Khosrowshahi
Chief Executive Officer
Uber
1515 3rd Street
San Francisco, CA 94158

Mr. Khosrowshahi,

Sixty years ago, the publication of Unsafe at Any Speed exposed a simple but consequential truth: when corporations are allowed to evade accountability for dangerous products, the public bears the cost in preventable deaths, injuries, and suffering.

At the time, automakers insisted that safety regulation and liability would stifle innovation. They blamed drivers rather than defective engineering. They resisted transparency. They fought accountability in courtrooms and legislatures alike.

History proved them wrong.

The system that emerged in response — product liability law, federal safety standards, recalls, and the safeguarded right of injured people to seek justice before a jury — became one of the most effective engines of automotive safety innovation in industrial history. Seatbelts, airbags, crashworthiness standards, fuel system protections, and countless recalls were not voluntary gifts from industry. They were the result of enforceable accountability.

Today, your company is moving in the opposite direction.

Uber is actively pursuing legal and legislative changes in California and at the federal level that would weaken its accountability for injuries and deaths tied to its platform and the autonomous vehicle systems Uber is now rapidly deploying. These efforts are not technical adjustments to litigation rules. They represent a fundamental attempt to undermine the rights of injured people and reduce corporate responsibility at the very moment rising autonomous systems are being tested on public roads at scale.

Uber's efforts in California are now being mirrored in Congress through the amendment sponsored by Representative Vince Fong, cynically advanced during a 2 AM House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee vote over Memorial Day weekend. That amendment would provide sweeping protections for Uber against liability arising from crashes caused by drivers operating on its platform.

This legislative effort arrives precisely as Uber accelerates its robotaxi ambitions and autonomous vehicle partnerships. The timing is not incidental. It reflects an reckless effort to secure for itself liability protections before its autonomous systems become widely deployed across American cities.

The implications extend far beyond rideshare disputes. By reshaping liability connected to automobile collisions, these measures threaten to erode longstanding product liability protections that have held automakers and technology companies accountable for defective braking systems, faulty sensors, dangerous software, battery fires, steering failures, and other lethal design defects over the years.

The danger becomes even more acute with autonomous vehicles. Robotaxis are not mature, fully validated systems. They are experimental technologies operating in complex real-world environments. When they fail — whether through sensor error, software malfunction, negligent remote operator intervention, road and weather conditions, or design defect — the public must retain the full ability to investigate those failures, access evidence, and hold the responsible parties accountable in court.

We have already seen what is at stake. In Tempe, Arizona, an Uber autonomous vehicle struck and killed pedestrian Elaine Herzberg after electronic system failures prevented proper detection and emergency braking. That tragedy was not simply an “accident.” It was a failure of design, oversight, and safety accountability.

Product liability law exists precisely to ensure that such failures are not hidden, normalized, or repeated. It is one of the few mechanisms that forces transparency from powerful corporations by requiring disclosure during litigation and allowing juries to evaluate the harm and determine rightful compensation of the injured and their next of kin.

Your company’s current policy direction would dangerously undermine that system at the very moment it is most needed.

No society should permit rapid deployment of autonomous transportation systems while simultaneously restricting the legal rights of those harmed when those systems fail.

The lesson of the last sixty years is clear: accountability produces safety. Immunity produces casualties.

If Uber wishes to lead in the future of transportation, it should do so by competing on safety, transparency, and responsibility — not by reshaping the law to limit accountability for the consequences of its hazardous products.

A true test of confidence in a technology is not how aggressively it is deployed, but whether its creators are willing to stand behind it when human lives are at stake.

If you claim your technology is safe, you should not fear a legal system of accountability.

Sincerely,
Ralph Nader