

He was killed in a car crash on Kelly Drive while riding in an Uber. Now, his family is taking the ride-share giant to court.

The mother of Phi Beta Sigma member Steven Moultrie is accusing Uber of failing to vet its drivers and misrepresenting itself as the “safest” transportation option.



Photo of Steven Moultrie provided by the Phi Beta Sigma fraternity, Nu Sigma chapter. Moultrie was a member of the fraternity.
Phi Beta Sigma fraternity, Nu Sigma chapter

by Abraham Gutman
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The mother of Steven Moultrie, a beloved member of Philadelphia’s Greek community who was killed in a three-vehicle crash while riding in an Uber in August, has sued the ridesharing giant, alleging the California-based company is responsible for her son’s death.

A lawsuit filed last week in Philadelphia's Common Pleas Court by Kline & Specter on behalf of Teresa Moultrie, Steven Moultrie's mother, accuses Uber of failing to "take precautions to ensure the safety of passengers" and vet its drivers. The lawsuit alleges that the company misrepresented the risk of using its transportation service and seeks unspecified monetary damages.

In August, Moultrie, 41, was seated in the back of a Nissan Altima ordered on his Uber app and headed south on Kelly Drive when the driver of the Uber attempted to make an illegal left turn, [police said following the incident](#). A Nissan Rogue hit the Altima at high speed, causing the Uber to spin and hit a third vehicle.

An ambulance transported Moultrie — an active member of Philadelphia's Nu Sigma chapter of the Phi Beta Sigma fraternity — to Temple University Hospital, where he was pronounced dead less than an hour later.

No criminal charges have been filed in relation to the crash. The driver was banned from Uber following the crash.

Helen Lawless, an attorney representing the Moultrie family, said that if people knew how little companies like Uber know about the people who work for them, they might think twice about using the services.

"They make becoming an Uber driver as seamless, easy, and quick as possible," Lawless said.

The lawsuit alleges that Uber uses only rudimentary background checks and does not interview drivers or ask for references.

Gig-economy companies like Uber can also try to minimize liability by arguing that drivers working for them are contractors, not employees, Lawless noted. But as Uber and other services take a larger role in society, "it's very important that we make sure that these companies are in the sphere of public accountability," she said.

An Uber spokesperson extended sympathies to Moultrie's family but declined to comment on the litigation.

"There are no words to describe this tragic loss. Our hearts remain with the rider's loved ones," the Uber spokesperson said in a statement.

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The company's safety reports show that 361 people died in the United States between 2017 and 2022 in crashes that involved an Uber. The company said in its latest report that its fatality rate is 1 in 12,000,000 rides, which is "substantially lower" than the national average of motor vehicle fatalities.

This is not the first time Uber has been sued by passengers who suffered injuries in crashes involving the ridesharing service's drivers. Previously, the company has cited its terms and conditions as a way to get out of court.

In September, a New Jersey appeals court blocked a lawsuit from a couple who suffered serious injuries in a crash after their Uber driver ran a red light. A three-judge panel decided that by accepting the app's terms and conditions, the couple had agreed to resolve disputes with the company through arbitration. (The couple argued that it was their minor daughter who accepted the app's terms.)

Similarly, in Massachusetts, the state's highest court of appeals ruled that a Boston chef who was paralyzed in a 2022 crash, and sought \$63 million in damages from Uber, needs to go through arbitration. That lawsuit also accused Uber of failing to vet its drivers.

And it's not just Uber that uses the terms-and-conditions legal defense.

After a man whose wife died from an allergic reaction in an Orlando Disney resort restaurant sued the entertainment conglomerate last February, Disney argued that the widower had waived his right to sue the company when he signed up for a Disney+ trial years prior. Disney faced intense public backlash and later dropped its bid to force arbitration, and the case is ongoing in a Florida court.

But those instances aren't deterring Lawless, the attorney representing the family, from attempting to bring Moultrie's case in court.

Plus, at least one Philadelphia Common Pleas Court judge was previously skeptical that Uber users waived their right to sue by clicking a box when they signed up to the app. In 2020, the judge ruled that Uber could not prove that an injured passenger who sued following a Center City crash actually read the terms and conditions, and allowed a lawsuit against the ridesharing giant to proceed, before vacating the order. The parties eventually reached a settlement, court records show.