

TECH

Uber CEO asks Trump to support gig workers impacted by the coronavirus

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KEY POINTS

- Uber CEO Dara Khosrowshahi asked President Donald Trump to provide relief to gig workers whose income has been significantly cut due to the coronavirus crisis.
- Uber has spent much of its history fighting to keep its workers classified as contractors, avoiding expenses like healthcare costs.
- Khosrowshahi asked the Trump Administration and Congress to consider updating labor laws to provide a “third way” to classify workers “to remove the forced choice between flexibility and protection for millions of American workers.”

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Uber Technologies CEO Dara Khosrowshahi outside the New York Stock Exchange ahead of the company's IPO, May 10, 2019.

As travel within U.S. cities becomes increasingly limited in efforts to mitigate the spread of the new coronavirus, [Uber](#) CEO Dara Khosrowshahi asked President Donald Trump on Monday to provide relief to gig workers whose income has been significantly cut due to the crisis.

“I respectfully and urgently request that the economic stimulus you are considering, along with any other future legislative measures in response to COVID-19, include protections and benefits for independent workers, not just employees,” Khosrowshahi wrote in a letter dated Monday. “My goal in writing to you is not to ask for a bailout for Uber, but rather for support for the independent workers on our platform and, once we

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reclassify workers, Uber is turning to the government to plead for help on their behalf.

Uber and other companies relying on gig workers like [Lyft](#) and DoorDash have [opposed a new law](#) in California that aims to reclassify its workers as employees. Uber is a [complainant in a lawsuit](#) challenging the statute. Uber, alongside delivery company Postmates and two contractors who work for the companies argued in their complaint that the law was “irrational and unconstitutional” and was “designed to target and stifle workers and companies in the on-demand economy.” Proponents of the law say it protects workers who are clearly core to the businesses of companies like Uber.

Khosrowshahi wrote Trump that reclassifying workers would bring its own set of challenges.

“[R]eclassifying these workers as employees could result in the provision of more social protections, but the reality of employment means it would eliminate a key value proposition of this type of work. Instead of true flexibility — where workers need not report at a certain time or place, can start or stop working at the tap of a button and can work on multiple platforms simultaneously — driving or delivering would come to resemble the kind of shift-based work that many people cannot fit into their lives,” he wrote.

Khosrowshahi made the case for a third class of workers outside of the employee-contractor binary, an argument Uber has been making in the face of California’s new law. He asked the Trump Administration and Congress to consider updating labor laws to provide a “third way” to classify workers “to remove the forced choice between flexibility and protection for millions of American workers.”

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including affected industries and small businesses, and that we emerge from this challenge stronger and with a prosperous and growing economy,” a White House spokesperson told CNBC in a statement.

Uber has already taken some steps to help its workers impacted by the crisis, as Khosrowshahi outlined in his letter. Uber agreed to offer workers on its platform 14 days of financial assistance if they are diagnosed with COVID-19 or told to go into quarantine by a public health authority. It has committed to providing free disinfectant products to drivers and waiving delivery fees for Uber Eats for orders from over 100,000 restaurants.

Khosrowshahi said his team is standing ready to help out “in any way we can.” Uber’s freight service is prioritizing shipments of relief goods like medical supplies and working with local governments to assess their needs, he wrote.

-CNBC’s [Deirdre Bosa](#) contributed to this report.

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