

PERSONAL FINANCE

Uber said it would compensate drivers who test positive for COVID-19. This driver was still denied

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Annie Nova

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KEY POINTS

- Uber said it would offer 14 days of financial assistance for any drivers who test positive for the coronavirus.
- Attila Erzeybek, an Uber driver in Phoenix, tested positive for COVID-19 in March.
- Despite a letter from his doctor, the company still said Erzeybek was ineligible for the relief.

When Attila Erzeybek, an Uber driver in Phoenix, tested positive for COVID-19 on March 23, he applied quickly for the financial assistance [the ride-sharing company has promised it will offer to drivers who fall ill amid the pandemic](#).

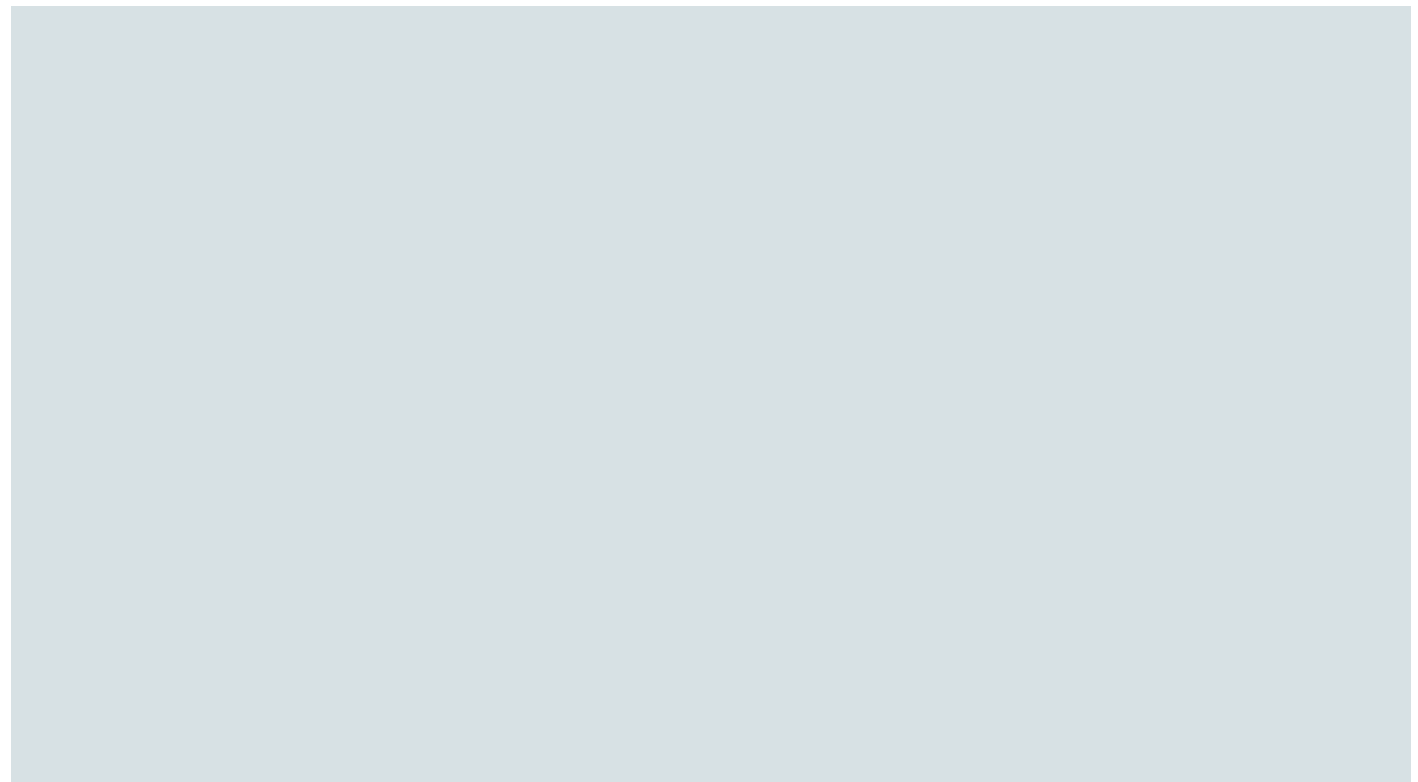
His case was unambiguous: He sent Uber a letter from his doctor, which stated that he

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reviewed Erzeybek's interactions with Uber and the letter from his doctor.)



Attila Erzeybek

Source: Attila Erzeybek

“It’s very clear,” Erzeybek, 52, said. “I have tested positive.” He said he reached out to the company around 10 times, but wasn’t getting anywhere.

After a CNBC reporter contacted Uber, a spokesperson for the company said it had handled Erzeybek’s situation incorrectly. She said he was eligible for the financial assistance and the company would be calling him to apologize. She added that Uber was taking new measures to make sure such an error doesn’t happen again.

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Because Uber has argued that its 1.3 million drivers in the U.S. are independent contractors rather than employees, they're normally not eligible for health insurance, overtime pay, sick leave or unemployment insurance. (The \$2 trillion relief law, the CARES Act, passed by Congress and signed into law last week, temporarily expands unemployment benefits to gig workers like ride-share drivers.)

What Uber said it would do amid the pandemic: Give [two weeks of financial](#) assistance to any driver who tests [positive for the coronavirus](#) or is required to quarantine. It said it would calculate these drivers' average daily earnings, and replace them for 14 days.

Erzeybek, who was born in Turkey, said the rejection put stress on him and his family. He was worried about being able to take care of his bills and three young children.

"I'm the only bread maker in the my family," he said. "And I can't pay my rent."

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He has been driving for Uber between 50 hours and 60 hours a week for the past three years. “In order to make a living, you need to work those hours,” he said. In March, he picked up passengers from New York, California and Washington – all hot spots for the coronavirus.

In the middle of March, he came down with muscle pains, a headache and bad cough. He went to his doctor and was diagnosed with COVID-19. “I’m 100% positive it was from one of my riders,” he said. He was told by his doctor and the health department in Arizona that he would have to self-quarantine for at least two weeks.

Although he’s happy the company has agreed to pay him, he said it’s wrong how many hoops he had to go through.

“I contacted them countless time, and no one did anything,” he said. “I’m dealing with COVID-19, and then I have to fight for what they’re supposed to be offering.”

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