

**COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS**

**SUFFOLK, ss.**

**SUPERIOR COURT  
C.A. NO. 2084CV01519-BLS1**

**ANDREA JOY CAMPBELL, in her official  
capacity as ATTORNEY GENERAL for the  
COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS,**

**Plaintiff,**

**v.**

**UBER TECHNOLOGIES, INC. and LYFT,  
INC.,**

**Defendants.**

**ATTORNEY GENERAL'S PROPOSED  
CONCLUSIONS OF LAW AS TO UBER TECHNOLOGIES, INC.**

INTRODUCTION .....	1
PROPOSED CONCLUSIONS OF LAW .....	3
I.    DRIVERS PERFORM SERVICES FOR UBER WHEN THEY PERFORM RIDES FOR RIDERS. ....	3
A.    Drivers Perform a Service for Uber Because the Revenue Flowing to Uber from the Ride is “Directly Dependent” on Drivers’ Transportation of Riders. ....	7
B.    Because Section 148B(a)’s Threshold Question is Unidirectional, Asking Only Whether the Worker “Perform[s] Any Service” for the Putative Employer, Evidence of the Services that Uber Purports to Provide to Drivers and Riders is Irrelevant to the Threshold Inquiry.....	10
II.   UBER CONTROLS AND DIRECTS DRIVERS’ PERFORMANCE OF SERVICES FOR RIDERS, DOING SO BOTH UNDER THE CONTRACTS FOR PERFORMANCE AND IN FACT. ....	13
A.    In Its Various Agreements with Drivers, Uber Retains Control Over Nearly Every Material Aspect of Drivers’ Performance of Rides. ....	14
B.    In Practice, the Relationship Between Uber and Drivers is One Where Uber Exercises Control Over Nearly Every Aspect of Drivers’ Performance of Services. ....	22
1.    Uber’s driver application process. ....	22
2.    Uber controls the ride from start to finish.....	23
a.    Drivers must follow a regimented set of steps in the App to receive ride requests and complete rides. ....	23
b.    Uber limits driver interaction with riders.....	24
c.    Uber uses its matching algorithm to control the assignment of rides to drivers. ....	25
d.    Uber unilaterally determines the amount to charge riders for rides and the amount that drivers are paid for performing the ride. ....	26
e.    Uber controls the payment process by accepting payment from the rider and separately paying the driver. ....	27

3.	Uber further controls drivers using a rider feedback system. ....	29
a.	Uber controls drivers by suspending or deactivating those drivers who fail to follow Uber’s quality and performance requirements. ....	29
b.	Uber controls drivers by using a system for evaluating and rating drivers. ....	30
4.	Uber uses a loyalty program, called Uber Pro, to measure and control driver productivity and driver turnover. ....	31
5.	Uber controls the availability of drivers to perform rides. ....	32
III.	DRIVERS PERFORM SERVICES WITHIN THE “USUAL COURSE OF BUSINESS” OF UBER WHEN THEY TRANSPORT RIDERS. ....	34
A.	Uber’s Ridesharing Business is Directly Dependent on the Rides that Drivers Perform. ....	34
1.	The Service an Individual is Performing is Necessary (as Opposed to Merely Incidental) to an Employer’s Usual Course of Business When the Business is Directly Dependent on the Success of the Worker’s Endeavors. ....	35
2.	Drivers’ Services are Necessary, as Opposed to Merely Incidental, to Uber Because Uber’s Business is Directly Dependent on the Success of the Drivers’ Endeavors. ....	37
a.	Uber collects a per-ride fee such that it benefits as drivers perform more rides. ....	38
b.	Uber takes an active role in securing customers for drivers to transport. ....	39
c.	Uber employs a sales department that works to attract riders to its App. ....	41
d.	Uber deals directly with potential rider customers when securing riders for the drivers. ....	41
e.	Riders pay Uber directly, and Uber unilaterally sets the prices of rides and driver earnings. ....	42
f.	Riders provide their complaints and feedback to Uber directly, who conveys this information to drivers via its ratings system. ....	43

g.	Uber uses driver incentives and disincentives to manage its labor supply in order to meet the needs of its rider customers.....	44
B.	Uber’s Self-Description is Consistent with its Operational Realities and Further Indicates that its Usual Course of Business is in Transportation. ....	46
C.	Uber is Much More than a “Platform Company” or Intermediary. ....	49
IV.	DRIVERS DO NOT PERFORM RIDES AS AN INDEPENDENT ENTREPRENEURIAL ENTERPRISE. ....	52
A.	Drivers Do Not Exercise Meaningful Entrepreneurial Control Over the Provision of Their Services. ....	53
B.	Drivers are an Integral Part of Uber’s Ridesharing Business, and Without them Uber Could Not Operate. ....	55
C.	Uber Precludes Drivers from Taking Steps to Establish and Promote Themselves as Independent Entrepreneurial Businesses. ....	57
V.	THE COURT SHOULD ENTER AN INJUNCTION TO ENSURE THAT UBER AFFORDS DRIVERS THE BENEFITS AND PROTECTIONS THAT FLOW FROM BEING CLASSIFIED AS AN EMPLOYEE UNDER SECTION 148B(a). ....	58
A.	When the Attorney General Requests Injunctive Relief, the Court Need Only Conclude that Such Relief is in the Public Interest. ....	59
B.	Achieving the Legislative Purpose of Section 148B—Protecting Employees from Being Deprived of the Benefits They are Entitled to Under the Law Due to Misclassification as Independent Contractors—is in the Public Interest. ....	60
C.	An Injunction Is Warranted to Ensure that Drivers Will Receive the Benefits They Are Entitled to as Employees. ....	65

## **INTRODUCTION**

For the purposes of the Commonwealth’s Wage and Hour Laws, every person “performing any services ... shall be considered an employee,” unless the putative employer satisfies its burden of proving each prong of the three-part test for independent contractor status set forth in G.L. c. 149, § 148B(a). Since 2011 Defendant Uber Technologies, Inc. (“Uber”) has engaged hundreds of thousands of drivers in Massachusetts to provide transportation for its rideshare business and treats the drivers that are transporting Uber riders from point A to point B as independent contractors, rather than employees. But Uber has not satisfied its burden under Section 148B(a) to classify these drivers as independent contractors. Because the trial evidence conclusively establishes that (1) individuals who drive for Uber perform services for the company and (2) that Uber cannot meet its burden on all of Section 148B’s three prongs, the Court should declare that drivers are Uber’s employees, rather than independent contractors, under Section 148B(a).

As to Section 148B(a)’s “threshold” requirement, the Attorney General has established that drivers perform services for Uber because they provide the very service—rides on demand—that Uber sells. Drivers perform this service each time they transport a rider, with Uber taking its share of the rider payment for each ride a driver provides and earning more revenue as drivers complete more rides—in other words, the revenue that flows to Uber from its rideshare business is directly dependent on drivers’ work of transporting riders. The service drivers perform generates substantial revenue for Uber and is so necessary to its business that without drivers their present business model would cease to exist. The trial evidence thus more than sufficiently establishes the provision of services under Section 148B(a) and, separately, refutes Uber’s argument that it is just a passive go-between on trip transactions between drivers and riders.

Because the Attorney General has established that drivers perform services for Uber, Uber must refute the presumption that drivers are employees by establishing each prong of Section

148B(a)'s three-part test. It cannot carry that burden for any portion of the relevant period (*i.e.*, July 2017 through the present).

On Section 148B(a)'s first prong, Uber cannot establish that drivers are "free from control and direction" in connection with the rides they provide for riders, "both under [their] contract ... *and* in fact." G.L. c. 149, § 148B(a)(1) (emphasis added). Before drivers can receive ride requests through Uber's App they must accept detailed terms and conditions that Uber imposes on them in voluminous driver agreements. In these mandatory agreements, Uber retains sole control over, among other things, assigning rides, setting rider fares, setting driver compensation, setting and collecting the service fees Uber keeps from each ride a driver provides, tracking and monitoring the locations of drivers, and issuing driver suspensions and deactivations. Uber unilaterally drafts the terms in the agreements and also retains the sole right to modify those agreements. In addition to its right to control drivers, Uber exercises control in-fact over drivers through its use of algorithmic management systems that govern nearly every aspect of a driver's performance of the ride itself. Some of Uber's means of control over drivers, such as setting and enforcing ride quality standards, are explicit, while other means of control, such as the use of matching, pricing, and incentives, are deeply imbedded in Uber's algorithmic processes but equally important in controlling the behavior of drivers.

Uber also cannot meet its burden under Section 148B(a)'s second prong because drivers' services are not provided "outside the usual course" of Uber's business. Indeed, drivers are essential to Uber's Ridesharing business because they provide the very transportation services that Uber sells. Uber holds itself out as a transportation service to the public and its investors, contracts with passengers to provide rides "on demand," and then depends on drivers to furnish this service. Because Uber retains a portion of each ride's fare, drivers generate substantial revenue for Uber

that increases as drivers provide more rides; and without drivers to transport customers, Uber would forgo this revenue and be unable to deliver the service they sell to riders.

Finally, Uber cannot meet its burden under Section 148B(a)'s third prong to show that drivers are "customarily engaged in an independently established business." The trial evidence establishes that Uber unilaterally sets rider fares and driver pay rates, establishes the ride types that a driver can provide and does not allow drivers to offer differentiated product or services on the App, controls the payment processing system (and thus bear the risk of loss of non-payment for the services), and precludes drivers from taking steps to establish and promote themselves as independent entrepreneurial businesses. As well, the trial evidence shows that drivers are integral to Uber's Ridesharing business, do not have a proprietary interest in a going concern that can be sold or transferred, and are subject to deactivation by Uber for failing to meet Uber's standards.

Accordingly, because Uber cannot establish any—much less all—of the statutory requirements of independent contractor status, this Court should declare that drivers are Uber's employees under G.L. c. 149, § 148B(a), and issue an injunction preventing Uber from continuing to misclassify drivers.

### **PROPOSED CONCLUSIONS OF LAW**

#### **I. DRIVERS PERFORM SERVICES FOR UBER WHEN THEY PERFORM RIDES FOR RIDERS.**

1. In asking whether the worker is "performing any service" for the putative employer, the Legislature intentionally designed Section 148B(a)'s threshold question to be a simple, unidirectional inquiry. *See Patel v. 7-Eleven, Inc.*, 489 Mass. 356, 362 (2022) (quoting *Tze-Kit Mui v. Mass. Port Auth.*, 478 Mass. 710, 712 (2018)) (Under Massachusetts law, "the plain language of [a] statute" is "the principal source of insight into legislative intent," and where the "statutory language is clear and unambiguous," the statute must be applied as written).

2. The ordinary meaning of the three words that the Legislature used in crafting the phrase “performing any service” confirms this. A “statute must be interpreted according to the intent of the Legislature ascertained from all its words construed by the ordinary and approved usage of the language, considered in connection with the cause of its enactment, the mischief or imperfection to be remedied and the main object to be accomplished, to the end that the purpose of its framers may be effectuated.” *Patel*, 489 Mass. at 362-63 (quoting *Harvard Crimson, Inc. v. President & Fellows of Harvard College*, 445 Mass. 745, 749 (2006)).

3. Working through the three words in the threshold phrase, the plain meaning of the first word—“perform”—is “to begin and carry through to completion; do” or “to take action in accordance with the requirements of; fulfill.” The Am. Heritage Dictionary 921 (2d 3d. 1982); *accord* Webster’s II New Riverside Univ. Dictionary 873 (1984) (“Webster’s II”).<sup>1</sup> “Any,” meanwhile, means “one or some, regardless of sort, quantity, or number.” Webster’s II, at 115; *see Dep’t of Hous. & Urb. Dev. v. Rucker*, 535 U.S. 125, 131 (2002) (quoting *United States v. Gonzales*, 520 U.S. 1, 5, (1997)) (“As we have explained, ‘the word ‘any’ has an expansive meaning, that is, ‘one or some indiscriminately of whatever kind.’”). And although dictionaries define the term “service” to have a number of meanings, the most relevant here are “employment in duties or work for another” or “an act of assistance or benefit to another or others; favor.” The Am. Heritage Dictionary 1121 (2d ed. 1982); *accord* Webster’s II, at 1066.<sup>2</sup> Taken together, a

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<sup>1</sup> When a statutory phrase is not specifically defined by the Legislature, as is the case with “performing any service” in Section 148B, the words must be “construed according to the common and approved usage of the language,” G.L. c. 4, § 6, ¶ 3, which may be reflected in dictionary definitions. *See Drake v. Leicester*, 484 Mass. 198, 200 (2020).

<sup>2</sup> Significantly, the Supreme Judicial Court has construed the statutory term “service” quite similarly in an analogous context, defining it to mean “an act done for the benefit or at the command of another” or “action or use that furthers some end or purpose: conduct or performance that assists or benefits someone or something.” *Comm’r of Rev. v. AMI Woodbroke, Inc.*, 418 Mass. (footnote continued)

worker who takes any action that assists or benefits the putative employer “perform[s]” a “service” under Section 148B(a).

4. A broad interpretation of the phrase “performing any service” is warranted because Section 148B(a) is a remedial statute that “should be given a construction that furthers, not defeats, its purpose.” *See, e.g., Monell v. Boston Pads, LLC*, 471 Mass. 566, 576 (2015) (“[T]here is no question that the independent contractor statute is a remedial statute” and therefore “should be given a construction that furthers, not defeats, its purpose.”); *see also Patel*, 489 Mass. at 360 (noting “the Legislature’s broad, remedial intent” in enacting Section 148B). This necessarily includes the interpretation of the statute’s threshold phrase, which triggers the presumption that a worker is an employee. G.L. c. 149, § 148B(a). Indeed, as the SJC explained in *Depianti v. Jan-Pro Franchising Int’l, Inc.*, “[i]n light of the statute’s broad remedial purpose, ‘it would be error to imply ... a limitation where the statutory language does not require it.’” 465 Mass. 607, 621 (2013) (quoting *Psy-Ed Corp. v. Klein*, 459 Mass. 697, 708 (2011)) (rejecting a narrowing of the threshold question to only those circumstances “where the putative employer and the putative employee have entered into a contract together”).

5. A broad interpretation of the phrase “performing any service” is also supported by the Legislature’s deliberate insertion of the word “any” into the threshold phrase before the bill codifying Section 148B was enacted in 1990. *See* Addendum at 4 (legislative history of St. 1990, c. 464, “An Act Enhancing the Enforcement of Labor Laws”). The original draft of Section

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92, 95 (1994) (quoting Webster’s Third New Int’l Dictionary 2075 (1961) in construing the phrase “services performed” in tax statutes G.L. c. 63 §§ 33 and 39A (1992 ed.)). The SJC did so in the context of concluding that the issuing of interest-free loans from a subsidiary to a parent corporation was a “service[e] performed,” noting in the process that its precedent “support[s] a broad interpretation of the term ‘services’” and that such an interpretation “gives effect to the statute’s broad remedial purpose.” *Id.*

148B(a) did not include the word “any.” *Id.* at 1-2. That the Legislature chose to include a word with such an expansive meaning, *see Rucker*, 535 U.S. at 131; *Sciaba Constr. Corp. v. Frank Bean, Inc.*, 43 Mass. App. Ct. 66, 69 (1997) (“We read the phrase ‘any Subcontractor’ in the indemnity clause to mean precisely that, any subcontractor.”), conclusively establishes that it intended to broadly define the scope of services that a worker could perform for a putative employer.<sup>3</sup>

6. Additionally, courts do not construe the threshold inquiry to impose a heavy burden on parties asserting a misclassification claim. Quite the contrary: the cases recognize that the threshold burden is modest, with the focus of the analysis in most Section 148B cases quickly turning to the three-pronged ABC test, under which the employer carries the burden.

7. In the leading case on the interpretation and scope of Section 148B(a)’s threshold question (*Sebago v. Boston Cab Dispatch, Inc.*, 471 Mass. 321 (2015)), the SJC held that taxicab drivers performed services for *two different* entities. 471 Mass. at 331. The drivers performed a service for the radio association defendants because “[t]he revenue flowing to the radio association” was “directly dependent on the drivers’ work of transporting passengers,” even though the drivers “were not required to perform services for the radio associations.” *Id.* at 331. Similarly, despite an “opaque” factual record,” the SJC assumed that the drivers could also have provided a service to the taxi medallion owner defendants by driving lease taxicabs with

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<sup>3</sup> Read hyperliterally, “performing any service” conceivably could encompass an action as miniscule as a favor. But the Attorney General does not understand such purely gratuitous endeavors to fall within Section 148B(a)’s threshold inquiry. And, in any event, for the reasons addressed *infra*, this Court need not tarry with the outer bounds of the “performing any service” inquiry. *See also Sebago v. Boston Cab Dispatch, Inc.*, 471 Mass. 321, 329 (2015) (“‘[O]ur respect for the Legislature’s considered judgment dictates that we interpret the statute to be sensible, rejecting unreasonable interpretations unless the clear meaning of the language requires such an interpretation.’”) (quoting *DiFiore v. Am. Airlines, Inc.*, 454 Mass. 486, 490-91 (2009)).

advertisements sold by the medallion owners, because such a service would have “increased the value” of the medallions and “facilitated the sale of advertising space.” *Id.* at 331.<sup>4</sup>

8. Although the service in question must benefit the putative employer, there is no requirement in Section 148B(a) that the activities of the worker be directed solely toward the putative employer. It is enough that services be for the putative employer’s customers.<sup>5</sup> Likewise because Section 148B(a)’s threshold question is unidirectional, asking only whether the individual “perform[s] any services,” evidence of the services that the putative employer purports to provide to the worker is irrelevant to the threshold inquiry.

**A. Drivers Perform a Service for Uber Because the Revenue Flowing to Uber from the Ride is “Directly Dependent” on Drivers’ Transportation of Riders.**

9. The SJC has determined that the threshold question’s low evidentiary burden is satisfied when the revenue flowing to the putative employer is directly dependent on the worker’s performance of the service. *Sebago*, 471 Mass. at 331. And while *Sebago*’s revenue-focused direct-dependence approach to Section 148B(a)’s threshold inquiry does not necessarily define the full scope of “services” covered by the statute, it perfectly illustrates how low the worker’s burden is for establishing that they are “performing any service” for the putative employer.

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<sup>4</sup> The SJC’s revenue-focused direct dependence analysis has been repeatedly deployed to explain why a worker has satisfied the threshold inquiry. In *Da Costa v. Vanguard Cleaning Sys., Inc.*, for instance, the Superior Court explained that the franchisee-plaintiffs performed a service for a commercial cleaning company, the top layer of a “three-tier franchise structure,” because the company’s revenue ... [wa]s directly dependent on the commercial cleaning work of the plaintiffs and other unit franchisees” and the company’s structure effected an “end run” around Section 148B(a). 34 Mass. L. Rptr. 483, 2017 WL 4817349, at \*5 (Mass. Super. Ct. Sept. 29, 2017). Similarly, in *Ruggiero v. Am. United Life Ins. Co.*, the District Court, in a brief, revenue-centric analysis, explained that an insurance agent performed two “distinct” services for the defendant insurance company. 137 F. Supp. 3d 104, 113, 118 (D. Mass. 2015) (services performed were (1) selling “at least some insurance products on behalf of” the company and (2) by “recruit[ing], train[ing], and supervis[ing] career agents who also sold insurance products” for the company).

<sup>5</sup> It would be a similarly hyper-literal interpretation of “services” to say that only those activities that a worker does within the company’s four walls can be “services” for the company.

10. Applying *Sebago*'s "direct dependence" test here, Drivers perform services for Uber by providing the very service—"rides on demand"—that Uber is selling. The trial evidence establishes that the revenue flowing to Uber from its Ridesharing business is "directly dependent" on drivers' transportation of riders, for at least *three* reasons. *Sebago*, 471 Mass. at 331.

11. *First*, Uber's Ridesharing business only makes money if its drivers transport riders. *See People v. Uber Tech., Inc.*, 56 Cal. App. 5th 266, 293 (Cal. Ct. App. 2020) (quoting *O'Connor v. Uber Tech., Inc.*, 82 F. Supp. 3d 1133, 1142 (N.D. Cal. 2015)) ("Put simply, ... Uber *only* makes money if its drivers actually transport passengers.") (emphasis in original). Indeed, Uber attributes a substantial percentage of its overall revenue as well as its total revenue in Massachusetts to the fees it retains from each ride that drivers complete on its Ridesharing platform. AG FF 223-231. Uber recognizes this per-ride revenue when the ride is complete (*i.e.*, after the driver's performance of the service—transporting a rider—is complete). AG FF 185. And the fees Uber collects on each ride are derived from the difference between the rider's payments on the ride (which Uber determines) and what the driver earns on the ride (which Uber also determines) and are collected after the ride is completed. AG FF 95, 185-188, 193-194, 198. *Cf. Sebago*, 471 Mass. at 331 (no services where drivers paid a flat fee for use of the medallion and the putative employer's income was not dependent on rides/services provided).

12. *Second*, Uber acknowledges that it does not earn much (if any) revenue from its Ridesharing business *but for* drivers' performance of rides for riders. *Subcont. Concepts, Inc. v. Comm'r of Div. of Unemp't Assist.*, 86 Mass. App. Ct. 644, 647 (2014) (driver "provided services" for company by delivering goods for its clients, who hired the company to supply them delivery drivers). If a ride is not completed, Uber admits it does not collect a service fee or otherwise generate revenue from its provision of the services it claims to provide to riders and drivers. AG FF 201. Likewise, if no ridesharing rides are completed by drivers during a particular quarter,

Uber's revenue attributable to Ridesharing during that quarter is zero. AG FF 207. *See also id.* (if comparatively fewer ridesharing trips are completed by drivers during a particular quarter, Uber's revenue attributable to Ridesharing is lower). In other words, Uber's ridesharing business is not viable without drivers' performance of rides for riders. *See, e.g., O'Connor*, 82 F. Supp. 3d at 1142 ("it is obvious drivers perform a service for Uber because Uber simply would not be a viable business entity without its drivers.").<sup>6</sup>

13. *Third*, whether in its filings with the SEC, statements on Earnings Conference Calls, or in public statements, Uber and its leading executives routinely confirm how drivers' services are integral to the value of the business. They regularly tell investors that Ridesharing revenues are a primary source of Uber's value, *see* AG FF 283, that Uber takes a share of each ride a driver provides and that this benefits Uber's bottom line, *see* AG FF 284, and that they have a superior supply of drivers (as compared to competitors) to meet the demand for ride requests, *see* AG FF 286. Uber's CEO, Dara Khosrowshahi has even gone so far to describe drivers as the face of Uber, saying "The face of Uber is the person sitting in the front seat ...." AG FF 299.

14. Because drivers provide a revenue-generating service necessary to sustain Uber's business each time they transport a rider, the trial evidence overwhelmingly satisfies Section 148B(a)'s low threshold burden for establishing that a worker is performing a service. *Sebago*, 471 Mass. at 331.

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<sup>6</sup> Relatedly, Uber does not know the portion of revenue attributable to the discrete services that it states it provides drivers and riders (*i.e.*, matching, payment processing, verification of the quality of market participants). AG FF 192. This is because Uber "doesn't think about the financials in that way" (matching), "that's not how we would break out our financials" (payment processing), and "that's not how Uber would put together or evaluate our financials" (participant verification). AG FF 192.

**B. Because Section 148B(a)'s Threshold Question is Unidirectional, Asking Only Whether the Worker "Perform[s] Any Service" for the Putative Employer, Evidence of the Services that Uber Purports to Provide to Drivers and Riders is Irrelevant to the Threshold Inquiry.**

15. Because the sole question in Section 148B(a)'s threshold inquiry is whether drivers are "performing any services" for Defendants, *see supra*, CL 1-8, for the *four* reasons set out below, the factual question of whether Uber provides services to drivers is not relevant to, and has no place in, the threshold inquiry.

16. *First*, as a textual matter, Section 148B(a) is clear that the threshold inquiry is unidirectional, asking exclusively whether the worker performs any service for the putative employer. G.L. c. 149, § 148B(a). The inquiry does not encompass the additional question of whether the putative employer performs any service for the worker. *See, e.g., Joslyn v. Chang*, 445 Mass. 344, 352 (2005) ("The duty of the court [is] to adhere to the very terms of the statute, and not, upon imaginary equitable considerations, to escape from the positive declarations of the text."). Nor does it contemplate a court resolving the threshold inquiry through a complex assessment of the relative weight of the services exchanged between the parties. G.L. c. 149, § 148B(a).

17. *Second*, the SJC has repeatedly described the threshold question in unidirectional terms. *See, e.g., Patel*, 489 Mass. at 370 (noting that Section 148B(a) analysis "begins with a threshold determination whether the putative employee 'perform[s] any service' for the alleged employer"); *Sebago*, 471 Mass. at 329 ("The threshold question is whether the plaintiffs provided services to the defendants."); *Depianti*, 465 Mass. at 621 (quoting Section 148B(a)) ("First, 'an individual performing any service' is presumed to be an employee."); *Somers v. Converged Access, Inc.*, 454 Mass. 582, 589 (2009) ("Under § 148B(a), an individual who performs services shall be considered to be an employee...."). And it has never engaged in a balancing test when

answering the threshold question, let alone given any consideration to services that the putative *employer* purportedly provides to the putative *employee*. *See, e.g., Sebago*, 471 Mass. at 331 (examining only whether the drivers performed any service for the radio associations and medallion owners). All of this is for good reason: the statute’s threshold question contemplates a simple, unidirectional inquiry, with no provision for the consideration of supposed services the employer purports to provide to the employee. *Tyler v. Michaels Stores, Inc.*, 464 Mass. 492, 495 (2013) (“[K]eeping in mind the rule that the actual words chosen by the Legislature are critical to the task of statutory interpretation”).

18. *Third*, the amendment to Section 148B(a) in 1990 that inserted the threshold phrase “performing any service” was part of the Legislature’s rational solution to the significant burdens that misclassification imposes on workers, law-abiding employers, and the Commonwealth. Subsequent legislative developments with Section 148B(a) make clear that since 1990 the Legislature has sought to strengthen (not weaken) the statute. *See* An Advisory from the Attorney General’s Fair Labor Division on M.G.L. c. 149, § 148B, 2008/1 (“AG Advisory 2008/1”) at 2 (discussing Legislature’s expansion of Section 148B(a)’s presumptive employee status between 1990 and 2004) (available at: <https://rb.gy/plgusd>).

19. *Fourth*, there is no reason to read non-textual restrictions into Section 148B(a)’s plain text, such that the statute would provide less protection for workers than intended by the Legislature, particularly where the SJC has been loath to do so. *See Depianti*, 465 Mass. at 621 (error to imply limitation—there, requiring an employment contract for Section 148B(a) to apply—where the statutory language does not require it); *Somers*, 454 Mass. at 591-92 (rejecting two equitable arguments regarding the meaning of Section 148B(a) because, as to the first, “[n]one of the statutory criteria speaks of the employer’s intent; rather all speak of the nature of the service

provided,” and, as to the second, “[h]ad the Legislature been concerned with th[e] risk [of worker windfalls], it would not have written [Section 148B] to impose strict liability on employers”).

20. Accordingly, the Court should give no weight, for purposes of the threshold inquiry, to the variety of services that Uber purports to provide to users (*i.e.*, drivers and riders). *See, e.g.*, Uber’s Proposed Findings of Fact (“UFF”) ¶ 60 (“Uber provides riders and drivers with a variety of services when they use the Rides platform”); UFF ¶ 70 (“Uber provides riders and drivers a matching service.”), ¶ 72 (“Uber provides drivers and riders with safe and cashless payment processing services.”), ¶ 73 (“Uber provides drivers with lead-generation services.”), ¶ 59 (“Uber provides drivers ... tools that help them improve the quality of customer experiences”).<sup>7</sup>

21. For the above reasons, the Court should find that drivers’ performance of rides for riders satisfies the threshold inquiry in Section 148B(a). Drivers are therefore presumed to be Uber’s employees and the burden of proof therefore shifts to Uber to establish that it can meet each of Section 148B(a)’s three prongs. Because, as explained below, the trial evidence demonstrates that Uber cannot meet its burden under Section 148B(a), the Court should grant judgment for the Attorney General.

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<sup>7</sup> In any event, Uber’s contrary argument rests on a logical fallacy—that the presence of one (*i.e.*, the services they claim to provide to drivers) establishes the absence of the other (*i.e.*, that drivers do not perform *any* services for the companies). But even under Uber’s characterization of its relationship with drivers, it is still plausible that services flow simultaneously in the other direction, too. *See Sebago*, 471 Mass. at 331 (drivers performed a service for the radio association defendants because “[t]he revenue flowing to the radio association” was “directly dependent on the drivers’ work of transporting passengers”). Indeed, the radio association defendants in *Sebago* performed a much less sophisticated version of the matching services that Uber provides for drivers, *see* 471 Mass. at 324 (mentioning “certain enumerated dispatch services” provided by the radio dispatch defendants to their members), but the SJC did not consider these services as part of the threshold inquiry, *id.* at 331. Because the threshold inquiry is not a balancing test, there is no reason to consider the services purportedly flowing from Uber to drivers. All that matters is the unidirectional inquiry set forth in the statute’s express text.

**II. UBER CONTROLS AND DIRECTS DRIVERS' PERFORMANCE OF SERVICES FOR RIDERS, DOING SO BOTH UNDER THE CONTRACTS FOR PERFORMANCE AND IN FACT.**

22. Under Section 148B(a)'s first prong, Uber must establish that drivers are "free from control and direction in connection with the performance of the service, both under [their] contract for the performance of service *and* in fact." G.L. c. 149, § 148B(a)(1) (emphasis added). As the Supreme Judicial Court has recognized, the use of the term "and" makes the Section 148B(a)(1) test itself "conjunctive." *Depianti*, 465 Mass. at 622. Thus, "a company asserting that a worker is an independent contractor must show that the individual is free from its control *both* as a matter of contract and as a matter of fact." *DaSilva v. Border Transfer of MA, Inc.*, 296 F. Supp. 3d 389, 400 (D. Mass. 2017) (emphasis in original). The worker, meanwhile, can establish misclassification by prevailing on just one branch of the test. *Id.*

23. As detailed below, Uber cannot satisfy either component of Section 148B(a)'s first prong because it, by contract, retains control over nearly every material aspect of drivers' performance of rides and, in practice, exercises control over nearly every aspect of drivers' performance of services. In strikingly similar circumstances, the highest appellate courts in Pennsylvania and New York have held that app-based drivers and couriers are not free from the company's direction and control. *Lowman v. Unemp't Comp. Bd. of Rev.*, 235 A.3d 278, 303-04 (Pa. 2020) (Uber driver an employee under Pennsylvania's unemployment compensation law based on "weighty" "indicia of control"); *Matter of Vega*, 35 N.Y.3d 131, 137-38 (2020) (Postmates' couriers employees due to company's control over assignments, compensation, and route tracking); *Matter of Lowry*, 189 A.D.3d 1863, 1865-66 (N.Y. App. Div. 2020) ("Uber exercised sufficient control over drivers to establish an employment relationship" for purposes of New York's unemployment compensation law). This Court should reach the same conclusion here.

**A. In Its Various Agreements with Drivers, Uber Retains Control Over Nearly Every Material Aspect of Drivers' Performance of Rides.**

24. “[C]ourts commonly look to contractual language as a starting point for assessing how a worker ought to be classified.” *Machado v. System4, LLC*, 471 Mass. 204, 214 (2015). Specifically, they examine “the degree of control and direction *retained* by the employing entity over the services performed.” *Athol Daily News v. Bd. of Rev. of Div. of Unemp’t Assist.*, 439 Mass. 171, 176-77 (2003) (emphasis added);<sup>8</sup> *see Machado*, 471 Mass. at 214 (citing *Rainbow Dev. LLC v. Mass Dep’t Indus. Accidents*, 2005 WL 3543770, at \*3 (Mass. Super. Nov. 17, 2005)) (“examining written provisions of agreement to assess whether entity, despite classifying workers as independent contractors, asserted control over worker performance by way of contract”).

25. Uber’s lengthy and complex agreements with drivers establish a web of contractual provisions that empowers Uber to retain control of nearly every aspect of drivers’ work. To provide rides through the App, drivers must accept a contract Uber calls the “Platform Access Agreement” (“PAA”). AG FF 17. *See Balles v. Babcock Power, Inc.*, 476 Mass. 565 571 n.12 (2017) (internal quotation omitted) (“The interpretation of a contract constitutes a question of law for the court.”). In the PAA, Uber describes drivers as “independent business enterprises,” says that a driver’s relationship with Uber is not as “an employee,” and characterizes a driver’s acceptance of a ride request as “creat[ing] a direct business relationship between you and your Rider ....” AG1082 §§ 1.1, 2.6. But proclamations about drivers’ classification status in form agreements like the PAA do not control, *see, e.g., Boston Bicycle Couriers, Inc. v. Deputy Dir. of Div. of Unemp’t Assist.*, 56 Mass. App. Ct. 473, 484 (2002) (court must look beyond how the contracts label Defendants’

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<sup>8</sup> Due to the nearly identical language in the first and third prongs of Section 148B(a) and G.L. c. 151A, § 2 (regarding unemployment compensation), courts often look to cases interpreting the same prong of the other statute. *Somers*, 454 Mass. at 589 (citing *Athol*, 439 Mass. at 175 (interpreting c. 151A)).

relationship with drivers *and* disregard “boilerplate language,” “designations,” and “labels,” inserted to avoid liability, as all carry no meaning if they are inconsistent with control retained in the contract or the facts of the relationship), especially where Uber retains the control by contract over every key aspect of the ride. The *nine* examples that follow illustrate the control retained by Uber in its various agreements with drivers. *See also DaSilva v. Border Transfer of MA, Inc.*, 377 F. Supp. 3d 74, 95 (D. Mass. 2019) (“A worker does not qualify as an independent contractor merely because his employer declines to exercise an extensive right to control reserved in an employment contract.”).

26. *First*, in the PAA, Uber retains control over drivers’ ability to access the App by requiring drivers to create and register an account with Uber while itself retaining the ability to temporarily or permanently deactivate the driver’s account without notice. AG1082 §§ 2.4, 5.3 (PAA 1.1.2022); AG1175 (PAA 8.3.20: identical); AG1176 (PAA 1.6.20: identical). *See Weiss v. Loomis, Sayles & Co., Inc.*, 97 Mass. App. Ct. 1, 7-8 (2020) (indicium of control where business retains the rights in contract to terminate, suspend, or otherwise discipline a worker “at will without reason”); *Lowman*, 235 A.3d at 303-04, 305 (Uber “retain[ing] the right to deactivate” driver another “weighty” indicial of control). As provided in the PAA and Uber’s Community Guidelines (which drivers must also accept before gaining access to drive on the App, *see* AG FF 25), Uber may deactivate a driver for a broad range of reasons, including violating any of Uber’s guidelines or agreements or engaging in activities that are “harmful to [its] brand, business or reputation.” AG 1082 §§ 2.2, 5.3. And Uber can enforce its rights to deactivate drivers by suspending a driver and conducting its own investigation, or without any notice to the driver at all. *See* AG1084 at 0048 (Community Guidelines 1.17.24) (“How Uber Enforces Our Guidelines”); *see also* AG 1082 § 5.3; AG1175 (identical); AG1176 (identical).

27. *Second*, Uber, in the PAA, retains nearly all rights to determine when, how, and which rides a driver receives through the App. AG1082 § 2.1 (Uber “may” send drivers ride requests, which it refers to as “lead generation”) & § 2.6 (“Ride requests *may* appear in the Driver App”) (emphasis added); AG1175 §§ 2.1 & 2.6 (identical); AG1176 §§ 2.1 & 2.6 (identical). This includes leaving Uber with full discretion whether to provide a driver a ride request. *See Lowman*, 235 A.3d at 306 (“Even with the Driver App activated, whether or not [driver] would have the opportunity to provide a ride service was determined by Uber which, by way of algorithm, determines which available driver will be offered an assignment”). As well, Uber determines what steps a driver must take to accept a ride request and can vary these steps based on the type of ride Uber sends the driver or the location of the driver. *See* AG1082 § 2.6(a) (“The mechanism for accepting or declining Rides may vary depending on your location and the type of Ride-request you accept.”); AG1175 § 2.6(c) (identical). And Uber, through the Community Guidelines, limits drivers to just contacting riders in connection with the ride they are providing and states that contact should cease when the ride ends. AG1084 at 0044 (prohibiting contact after a trip is completed, “unless it’s to return a lost item”).<sup>9</sup> Consequently, Uber, by contract, does not allow for any future opportunities for a driver to provide rides for particular riders outside of the assignment of rides through the App. AG1082 § 2.6(c); AG1175 § 2.6(c) (identical); AG1175 § 2.6(c) (identical). *See Lowman*, 235 A.3d at 306 (“Driver could not build his own client base under the auspices of his Uber relationship because his contract limits his communications with

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<sup>9</sup> In prior versions of its Community Guidelines, Uber also retained the ability to (a) deactivate drivers whose “cancellation rate continue[d] to exceed the maximum limit” for the city that the driver was in and (b) log drivers out of the driver app that “consistently decline[d] trip requests.” AG1187 at 1537.

customers to the Uber App and are permitted only for the purpose of providing rides through Uber.”).<sup>10</sup>

28. *Third*, Uber retains the right to determine the price of the ride for the rider, the driver earnings, and the amount of its own revenue on the ride. *See Driscoll v. Worcester Telegram & Gazette*, 72 Mass. App. Ct. 709, 715 (Mass. App. Ct. 2008) (right to unilaterally determine the price of the service being sold to the customer is one indicator of control); *Lowman*, 235 A.3d at 303-04 (Uber’s “pay structure” a “weighty” indicia of control). According to Uber’s Fare Addendum (another agreement that drivers must accept before gaining access to drive on the App, *see* AG FF 25), when a driver accepts a ride, the driver agrees to designate Uber as its “limited pricing agent,” and that the ride price (described in the Fare Addendum as the “Fare” for the ride) “recommended by Uber shall be the amount used in the transaction.” AG1165 at 0795 (Fare Addendum 8.16.21). Drivers also agree to accept the “Driver Payment” determined by Uber (plus any gratuity paid by the rider) and agree that Uber may collect booking and service fees from the overall price of the ride. *Id.* at 079-96 (“Driver Payment,” “Our Services Fees,” and “Rider Payment”). Drivers are not permitted to charge riders a higher price than that “recommended” by Uber. *Id.* at 0796.<sup>11</sup> In exercising its role as the “limited pricing agent,” Uber provides drivers notice that the ride price may be calculated using actual *or* estimated time and distance rates (but no explanation of when or why Uber would use either method). *See* AG1165 at 0794; *see also*

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<sup>10</sup> In addition, a driver contacting a rider in relation to business outside of Uber would run counter to a provision in the PAA where drivers agree that they will use the app “*solely* for the purpose of providing [r]ides and accessing services associated with providing [r]ides.” AG1082 § 2.1; AG1175 § 2.1 (identical); AG 1176 § 2.1 (identical).

<sup>11</sup> While Uber strictly forbids riders from increasing a fare, Uber indicates that a driver can “charge a fare that is less”—a concession that does little more than reduce a driver’s earnings while leaving Uber’s share of the revenue untouched.

AG1216 at 1473 (Fare Add. 4.7.21: same). Where Uber unilaterally makes changes to these rates, drivers are deemed to accept them “by continuing to accept Ride requests.” AG1165 at 0794-95.

29. *Fourth*, Uber, in the Fare Addendum, retains control over the receipt and handling of rider payments. AG1165 at 0796. *See Driscoll*, 72 Mass. App. Ct. at 715 (business’ retention of contractual right to require customers to pay the company directly for services, rather than the worker, is an indicium of control); *Lowman*, 235 A.3d at 306 (contractual requirement to use Uber’s “payment processing functionality” evidence of control). All payments by riders must occur through the App. AG1165 at 0796 (Fare Add. 8.16.21) (“[Y]ou hereby appoint us your limited agent for payment collection for your Rides and we hereby accept such appointment. We will process the Rider payment on your behalf through our Platform’s payment processing functionality.”). Uber retains the right to, “in [its] good faith discretion,” “adjust or, in more serious situations, cancel or refund in its entirety” any portion of the payment it receives from a rider. AG1165 at 0796-97. *See Lowry*, 189 A.D.3d at 1866 (noting that Uber reserves the right to adjust the fare charged to the rider). Drivers may dispute this by “report[ing] errors promptly,” but otherwise “waive [their] right to dispute the adjustment, cancellation, or refund.” AG1165 at 0796-97.

30. *Fifth*, Uber retains the control to solicit, record, and maintain rider ratings of drivers and then either reward or punish drivers based on the ratings. *See Vargas v. Spirit Deliv. & Distrib. Servs., Inc.*, 245 F. Supp. 3d 268, 282 (D. Mass. 2017) (finding that putative employer’s clients sent customer satisfaction surveys asking customers to grade drivers’ performances, and maintained and accessed “performance matrices” for all drivers to determine whether drivers would receive a bonus, or whether warning or termination was needed). In its Community Guidelines, Uber explains that it prompts riders to rate their experience at the end of each trip. AG1084 at 047 (“Drivers, riders . . . can give and receive ratings, as well as give feedback on how

the trip...went”). Uber provides drivers with only their average rating across all riders the driver has received a rating from. *Id.* No rating given to a driver can be changed or modified by the driver with Uber. *Id.* (“Contacting Support will not lead to an individual rating being removed.”). Uber conditions certain driver rewards on, among other requirements, the driver being able to maintain at least a 4.85 average star rating. AG1149 at 2960 (Non-California Uber Pro Terms & Conditions). Drivers’ ratings also determine their ability to use the App. Where a driver’s average rating falls below the minimum average rating for their city, Uber notifies drivers that they may lose access to the Ridesharing App, and will reach out to the driver beforehand to “share information that may help [them] improve [their] rating.” *Id.* This type of constant assessment of performance is a strong indicia of control by Uber. *Driscoll*, 72 Mass. App. Ct. at 712, 714-15 (newspaper publisher/distributor “used customer complaints as a method of monitoring carrier performance” and “could discharge a carrier because of customer complaints”); *Lowman*, 235 A. 3d. at 305 (“Uber supervised [driver’s] work, using passenger ratings of his services.”).

31. *Sixth*, Uber uses the driver agreements to impose behavioral standards for drivers’ performance of rides. *See Hogan v. InStore Group, LLC*, 512 F. Supp. 3d 157, 178 (D. Mass. 2021) (express retention of the control in the contract is enough to influence behavior of workers governed by that policy). For instance, the PAA prohibits drivers from making personal stops while a rider is in their vehicle. AG1082 § 2.6(b) (“You agree to transport Riders, or their guests, directly to their specified destination ... without unauthorized interruption or unauthorized stops.”); AG1175 § 2.6(b) (identical); AG1175 § 2.6(b) (identical). Similarly, Uber’s Community Guidelines prohibit drivers from having anyone else in the car with them other than the rider (and the rider’s guests). AG1084 at 0045. And while drivers are not required by contract to wear a uniform or display Uber branded material on their cars, if drivers decide to display any materials, they may use only Uber authorized branded materials and may not display them unless they are

accessing the App. AG1082 § 2.7(a)-(b); *see* AG1175 § 2.7(a)-(b) (substantially similar); AG1176 § 2.7(a)-(b) (substantially similar). Drivers are also required to destroy any Uber branded materials if they are deactivated or lose access to the App. AG1082 § 2.7(d).

32. *Seventh*, Uber retains sole discretion in contract for vehicle requirements. *See Subcont. Concepts*, 86 Mass. App. Ct. at 646, 648 (contract requirements for how courier maintains personal vehicle used for deliveries indicative of direction and control); *Lowman*, 235 A.3d at 284 (Uber required driver's vehicle meet its criteria to be authorized for use). While drivers are permitted to use their personal vehicles to provide rides, any vehicle they use must meet vehicle requirements that are set by Uber. AG1082 § 2.5(a) & (c); AG1175 § 2.5(a) & (c) (identical); AG1176 § 2.5(a) & (c) (identical); UX3001 § 2.5(a) & (c) (identical); AG1084 at 0045 ("Drivers . . . must complete trips . . . using only approved vehicles"); *see* AG1069; AGO FF ¶ 20. Uber's Community Guidelines also direct drivers to maintain their vehicles. AG1084 at 0045 ("drivers . . . are expected to keep their vehicles maintained and in good operating condition"). Uber has regional vehicle requirements, which list the vehicle models that Uber allows drivers to use and specify certain aspects of the car's condition and appearance. *See, e.g.*, AG1120 (Eligible vehicles in Boston); AG1123 (Vehicle Requirements – Boston).

33. *Eighth*, "in the virtual world in which Uber operates, it monitor[s] and supervise[s] [drivers'] provision of driving services." *Lowman*, 235 A. 3d. at 304-05. While drivers are using the App to provide rides, Uber collects "precise and approximate location data" from the drivers' phones. AG1219 (Uber Privacy Notice) at 061. In agreeing to the PAA, drivers grant Uber the "irrevocable right" to obtain their geo-location information and share their location with third parties. AG1082 § 2.10(a). Although Uber states that it will not use this information to "supervise, direct, or control" the driver or their provision of rides, *see id.*, it uses this data to detect "unsafe driving behavior, such as speeding, harsh braking and acceleration" and warns drivers they are at

risk of deactivation due to such behavior. AG1219 at 063. It also requires drivers to agree to “choose the most effective, efficient, and safe manner to reach the destinations associated with a Ride.” AG1082 § 2.6. Uber also monitors the dates and times that drivers access the App, as well as communications between drivers and riders, including the content of such communications. AG1219 at 062. It retains the right to use this data to “detect and combat fraud” as well as perform customer support, including to investigate and address user concerns. AG1219 at 063.

34. *Finally*, Uber retains the unilateral ability in contract to modify or supplement its various agreements with drivers. *See, e.g.*, AG1082 §§ 11, 12.1 (PAA); AG1175 § 13.1; AG1176 § 12.1.<sup>12</sup> If drivers do not accept the modifications, Uber reserves the right to limit them from accessing the App. AG1082 § 12.1. Additionally, drivers may not decline modifications to “information hyperlinked” in the PAA, as “such modifications shall be effective when posted,” and includes applicable terms that are incorporated into the PAA by reference. AG1082 § 12.1; *see id.* at 1492 (hyperlinking Uber’s Community Guidelines, Referral policies, accessibility policies, and U.S. Service Animal Policy); *id.* § 2.5(b) (hyperlinking Uber’s Privacy Notice); *id.* § 4.1 (hyperlinking Uber’s Instant Pay website); *see also* AG1175 at 0115 & § 13.1 (identical); AG1176 at 0095 & §12.1 (identical).

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<sup>12</sup> Uber has updated the PAA, Fare Addendum, and Community Guidelines repeatedly over the relevant period. *See* AG FF 25, 27, 29. Prior to the PAA and Fare Addendum (which both appear to date to January 2020), Uber’s terms and conditions with drivers were contained in the Technology Services Agreement. UX3005; UX3004. In that agreement, Uber retained rights to, among other things, (a) “deactivate [drivers that] have not fulfilled a request for Transportation Services using the Driver App at least once a month,” UX3004 at 0260; *see* UX3005 at 0144 (substantially similar to UX3004); (b) “supply [drivers] upon request with [Uber] Devices and provide the necessary wireless data plan for such Devices . . . ,” UX3004 at 0263; *see* UX3005 at 0147 (substantially similar to UX3004); (c) require that drivers “maintain high standards of professionalism, service, and courtesy,” UX3004 at 0264; *see* UX3005 (identical to UX3004); and (d) “change the Fare Calculation at any time in [Uber]’s discretion based upon local market factors . . . ,” UX3005 at 0266; *see* UX3004 at 0149 (identical to UX3005).

**B. In Practice, the Relationship Between Uber and Drivers is One Where Uber Exercises Control Over Nearly Every Aspect of Drivers' Performance of Services.**

35. On top of retaining significant control over drivers in the various driver agreements, Uber controls and directs the material aspects of drivers' performance of services for riders. *See Athol*, 439 Mass. at 177-78 (test for control in fact centers on whether the worker has "freedom from supervision 'not only as to the result to be accomplished but also as to the means and methods that are to be utilized in the performance of the work.'"). The inquiry focuses on the actual relationship between the parties and turns on whether the "'worker's activities and duties [were] actually ... carried out with minimal instruction.'" *Sebago*, 471 Mass. at 332 (quoting AG Advisory 2008/1); *Ruggiero v. Am. United Life Ins. Co.*, 137 F. Supp. 3d 104, 113 (D. Mass. 2015) ("the crux of the inquiry is in the *actual* relationship between the parties, and whether the plaintiff performs his work in fact 'with minimal instruction'").

36. As detailed below, when a driver agrees to perform transportation services, Uber controls the material aspects of the ride from start to finish, determining the sequence of requirements drivers must follow, offering ride requests to drivers, setting prices, and supervising the driver's work until their performance of the service—the ride—is complete. *See infra*, CL 39-52. More broadly, Uber establishes and enforces standards of quality and continuously gauges whether drivers are meeting or failing those standards. *See infra*, CL 53-61. And, finally, while the decision to log into the App resides with individual drivers, Uber uses extensive measures to influence when, where, and for how long drivers will work once they make themselves available to perform rides. *See infra*, CL 62-65.

**1. Uber's driver application process.**

37. Courts consider whether a company requires workers to submit to an application process or interview process before the worker can begin work as part of the indicia of control.

*See Lowman*, 235 A.3d at 303-04 (noting Uber’s use of a driver application); *Weiss*, 97 Mass. App. Ct. at 8 (company interviewed worker first). Here, Uber controls who can drive using the Uber App by requiring drivers to complete a driver application process. AG FF 14-22. As part of its application process, Uber requires drivers to, among other things, create an account with Uber, provide detailed information about the driver’s vehicle including the color, year, make, and model, and agree to Uber’s various driver agreements. *Id.*

38. As part of this process, Uber makes clear that drivers may not allow third parties to use their Uber account to provide rides. AG1084. This too is an indicium of control. *Driscoll*, 72 Mass. App. Ct. at 715 (“prohibited the use of substitute carriers with delivery histories that it did not deem acceptable”); *DaSilva*, 377 F. Supp. 3d at 95-96 (drivers are permitted “to either send replacement drivers to cover their routes or simply not take routes for those days” and “can hire and fire helpers and secondary drivers and decide how much to pay them.”).

**2. Uber controls the ride from start to finish.**

**a. Drivers must follow a regimented set of steps in the App to receive ride requests and complete rides.**

39. Uber’s active involvement in each step of the ride demonstrates the significant level of control the company exerts over drivers’ performance of rides. *See Subcont. Concepts*, 86 Mass. App. Ct. at 648 (requirement that worker perform task according to a sequence of steps prescribed by the putative employer is an indicium of control); *see also Lowman*, 235 A. 3d at 304 (without [Uber’s Driver App], [the driver] could provide no service. It was the sole means by which he connected, met, or interfaced with a passenger.”). To receive ride requests, a driver must let Uber know they are available to work by pressing an icon in the App. AG FF 33. Uber controls whether drivers receive ride requests through the App. AG FF 35. When notifying drivers of the availability of a ride request, Uber provides them with limited information about the ride and rider—just the

star rating of the rider, the approximate rider pickup location, and the approximate rider drop-off location. AG FF 36. Uber then limits drivers' time to evaluate and accept ride requests to approximately 15 seconds, offering the request to another driver if the first one fails to respond within this window of time. AG FF 37. *See Lowry*, 189 A.D.3d at 1864-66 (considering the 15 seconds the driver has to accept the customer's request as part of substantial evidence that Uber exercised sufficient control over drivers to establish an employment relationship).

40. If the driver accepts the ride request, Uber provides the rider's name, actual pickup location, and GPS directions to the pickup location. AG FF 39. Once the driver picks up the rider, they must then swipe another icon in the App to notify Uber that they have begun the ride. AG FF 40. Only after this step is completed does Uber provide the driver with the rider's actual destination. *Id.* And when the driver delivers the rider to the destination, they must notify Uber of this by swiping an icon in the App to complete the ride. AG FF 41.

41. In addition, from the start to finish of each ride, drivers must keep the App open and running. AG FF 33-42. *Lowman*, 235 A.3d at 304-05 ("In the virtual world in which Uber operates, it monitored and supervised [the driver's] provision of driving services."). This means that while drivers are providing rides, they are never out of Uber's sight. *Id.* at 305 (Uber's tracking technology "gave Uber real-time reporting on the progress of the service [the driver] provided"). Where Uber, through the App, remains so involved in real-time in the actual driving assignment—knowing drivers' location at all times when they are logged in, and receiving real-time reporting on the service drivers provide, including the time it takes for each ride—this is a strong indicium of control over the drivers' work. *See Lowman*, 235 A.3d at 305.

**b. Uber limits driver interaction with riders.**

42. Uber exercises additional control over drivers' performance of services by limiting driver interaction with riders. *See Hogan*, 512 F. Supp. 3d at 178 (customer complaints routed back

to the company rather than to individual workers); *Lowman*, 235 A.3d at 306. Drivers are never given a rider's telephone number or other contact information to contact them outside of the App.

AG FF 49. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] *See Vega*, 35 N.Y.3d at 138 (putative employer's handling of customer complaints an indicium of control). [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

43. Besides mediating communication between riders and drivers, Uber limits the free exchange of ride-related information between the rider and driver. This too is control. *See, e.g. Lowman*, 235 A.3d at 292 (Uber does not provide drivers with customer contact information). Uber gives the driver 15 seconds to evaluate information about the ride and only shows the rider's name and approximate pick-up location to the driver if they accept. AG FF 37, 39. While considering the ride request, the driver does not know the amount the rider is paying for the ride. AG FF 38. Until the driver has informed Uber that they have picked up the rider, Uber does not share the rider's exact destination location either. AG FF 40. The rider's payment is collected by a third-party payment processor determined by Uber and the driver has no right or opportunity to ask for payment from the rider directly. AG FF 42-47.

**c. Uber uses its matching algorithm to control the assignment of rides to drivers.**

44. As a further indicium of control over the performance of the ride, Uber determines the assignment of rides to drivers. AG FF 79-82. *See Lowman*, 235 A.3d at 306 ("whether or not [the driver] would have the opportunity to provide a ride service was determined by Uber which, by way of its algorithm, determines which available driver will be offered an assignment"); *Vega*,

35 N.Y. 3d at 137-38 (Postmates' couriers are employees due to company's control over assignments, compensation, and route tracking). [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

45. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] And while drivers have the choice of accepting or rejecting matches offered by Uber, only to be given another match determined by Uber, the algorithm does not optimize for the priorities of individual drivers in its matching decisions. AG FF 90.

46. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

**d. Uber unilaterally determines the amount to charge riders for rides and the amount that drivers are paid for performing the ride.**

47. The ability to determine the amount of compensation of the worker and the price of the goods or service for the end user (*i.e.*, customer) is also a significant factor for control. *See Driscoll*, 72 Mass. App. Ct. at 715. ("WT & G carriers did not own the newspapers, which remained the property of WT & G, nor could they sell the papers at a price higher than that established by WT & G"); *Vega*, 35 N.Y.3d at 138 (Postmates unilaterally sets the delivery fees and bills the customers directly through the app); *Lowman*, 235 A.3d at 304 (Uber unilaterally

determines the passenger fares and the driver's percentage); *Lowry*, 189 A.D.3d at 1864-65 (Uber unilaterally calculates the fare for the rider). Here, the trial evidence establishes that Uber exercises control over *both* the price of the service and the compensation of the driver.

48. As to rider prices, Uber exerts unilateral control over the prices charged to riders. Drivers have no knowledge until *after* a ride is completed what rider price Uber has set for the ride or the fee that Uber intends to collect from the ride. AG FF 97. And even if drivers were able to persuade a rider to tell them the amount they were charged for the ride, drivers are not able to negotiate this amount with Uber. *Id.*

49. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Drivers cannot negotiate changes in the amount of earnings they receive for providing a ride with Uber. AG FF 38, 189. Nor are drivers permitted to charge riders a higher fare for a ride than is quoted to the rider by Uber, or separately charge for rides. AG FF 96.

50. Additionally, as part of the assessment of a putative employer's control through pricing mechanisms, courts look at whether the putative employer unilaterally adds or modifies fees or charges to the end consumer. *See Lowry*, at 1864-65 (discussing Uber's ability to charge riders a cancellation fee). Uber's control of pricing is evident in this case by Uber's imposition of various additional fees on riders, including cancellation fees on riders who cancel a ride request, and damage fees for riders who cause damage to a driver's vehicle. *See* AG1220 (various fees added to rider charges).

**e. Uber controls the payment process by accepting payment from the rider and separately paying the driver.**

51. To gauge control in-fact, courts also assess the extent of control that the putative employer has over collecting payments from the customer and paying the worker. *See Driscoll*,

72 Mass. App. Ct. at 715 (facts supporting control in-fact where “WT & G's customers paid WT & G directly and WT & G paid the carrier”). In the context of app-based work, courts have found significant indicia of control when the company collected payments from customers (*i.e.*, riders), set and retained its own fees, and then paid the worker. *See Lowman*, 235 A.3d at 73 (noting that Uber collects the fares, retains its service fee, and then pays the driver); *Vega*, 35 N.Y.3d at 138 (relevant to control in-fact that company directly pays the couriers their compensation); *Lowry*, 189 A.D.3d at 1864-65 (Uber collects the customer’s payment through the app at the completion of the trip, subtracts a service fee for itself, and then pays the driver the remainder).

52. Here, the evidence shows that Uber controls the payment process. It maintains the payment information of each rider and charges each rider for the full price of the ride. AG FF 42. The driver does not collect payment directly from the rider, nor does the driver even know the amount the rider is paying for the ride. AG FF 42-44. Rather, to collect the rider payment, Uber directs third-party payment processors (ones that Uber has chosen) to charge the rider a specified amount, acquire those funds from the rider’s designated account, and deposit the funds into a Uber-controlled bank account. AG FF 44. At the time that Uber charges the rider for the ride, Uber effectively collects a portion of those funds as its fees for the ride. AG FF 47. Payment of the driver happens separately from the process to charge the rider. Uber pays drivers from funds in an Uber-controlled account on the direction of Uber; the payment processor draws those funds according to Uber’s instructions and sends them to a driver as per Uber’s instructions. AG FF 46-47. Drivers cannot withhold Uber’s fees in the event the driver disagrees with Uber. AG FF 47.

**3. Uber further controls drivers using a rider feedback system.**

**a. Uber controls drivers by suspending or deactivating those drivers who fail to follow Uber's quality and performance requirements.**

53. Control is also present when the business can terminate, suspend, or otherwise discipline the worker. *See Weiss*, 97 Mass. App. Ct. at 7-8. Uber exerts that type of control here through its deactivation policy under which a driver can be temporarily or permanently suspended for low ratings or violations of Uber's policies. AG FF 61-63, 67-71. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]<sup>3</sup> Uber, therefore, exerts control through the threat of deactivation for failing to perform services in a manner consistent with the company's objectives.

54. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

---

13 [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

**b. Uber controls drivers by using a system for evaluating and rating drivers.**

55. An employer's supervision and monitoring of a worker's performance is indicative of control. *DaSilva*, 377 F. Supp. 3d at 95. This includes the use of a customer rating system to evaluate a worker's performance. *See O'Connor*, 82 F. Supp. 3d at 1150-51 (Uber's rating system is an integral part of Uber's ability to "monitor drivers" and ensure that drivers adhere to Uber's "quality control" requirements).

56. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] This ratings system is so central to the control of drivers that at the end of every ride a driver receives a star rating on a scale of one five stars and drivers cannot opt out of being rated. AG FF 56-57.

57. Uber uses the star ratings to make decisions about which drivers it will permit to use the App. Specifically, it sets a minimum star rating threshold for drivers. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Moreover, Uber tells drivers their star ratings in the aggregate and informs drivers of ways to get higher ratings. AG FF 57, 59 (discussing emails and text messages from Uber to drivers about improving a driver's star ratings), 64 (email about how to "get more stars from riders"). If a driver receives poor ratings, rider complaints, or falls below Uber's minimum star rating threshold, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

58. Uber also imposes quality control by tracking a driver's "acceptance" and "cancellation rate." *See, e.g.*, AG1188 (stating that Uber has several ways to "measure driver

quality, with the most important being Star Ratings and Cancellation Rate”). Although Uber does not set explicit thresholds for cancellation and acceptance rates, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] Uber requires drivers to maintain a cancellation rate of 10% or less and an acceptance rate of 75% or more to participate in Uber Pro. AG FF 148, n.11.

**4. Uber uses a loyalty program, called Uber Pro, to measure and control driver productivity and driver turnover.**

59. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] In designing the program in this manner, Uber Pro functions as a mechanism to control the “mode, manner and means” by which the worker performs the service at issue. *Athol*, 439 Mass. at 177.

60. To earn rewards through Uber Pro drivers must maintain a certain star level rating and attain points by accepting more rides. AG FF 148. This helps shape drivers’ behaviors in two important ways, both of which advance Uber’s business objectives. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

61. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

**5. Uber controls the availability of drivers to perform rides.**

62. Uber's narrative that drivers can provide rides when they want, accept only the ride leads they prefer, and perform personal tasks while waiting for certain types of ride requests in no way undercuts a conclusion that drivers should be classified as employees under Section 148B(a)(1). While it is true that these items, in some contexts, are traditional indicia of independent contractor status, *see Comm'r of the Div. of Unemp't Assist. v. Town Taxi of Cape Cod, Inc.*, 68 Mass. App. Ct. 426, 430 (2007), in this instance they orbit on the periphery of the relationship between Uber and drivers. *Lowman*, 235 A.3d at 307 ("that Uber's business model does not require regularly scheduled work hours from its workforce does not translate into an automatic independent contractor relationship"). The core of that relationship is when drivers are performing services (*i.e.*, transporting riders from point A to point B). And as described above, Uber exercises significant control over every aspect of the ride. *See supra*, CL 37-65.

63. In situations like this one (where a company exercises such significant control over the worker's performance of the service), Section 148B(a)(1) should not be construed to permit Uber the ability to escape the consequences of its behavior simply by creating public-facing service rules that appear to allow workers some flexibility over when they perform that service. *Depianti*, 465 Mass. at 620 (quoting *Taylor v. E. Connection Operating, Inc.*, 465 Mass. 191, 198 (2013)) (Section 148B's purpose "is 'to protect workers by classifying them as employees, and thereby grant them the benefits and rights of employment, where the circumstances indicate that they are, in fact, employees.'"). This is particularly true where the construction of those service rules is entirely within the company's control (as is the case with Uber). *See id.* at 621 (quoting *Cumpata*

*v. Blue Cross Blue Shield of Mass., Inc.*, 113 F. Supp. 2d 164, 168 (D. Mass. 2000)) (“The Wage Act is meant to protect employees from the dictates and whims of shrewd employers.”).

64. The shrewdness of Uber’s business model is that both its strict control over *how* drivers perform rides and its flexibility over *when* drivers perform rides benefit Uber’s primary business objectives. Indeed, Uber exercises such significant control over *how* the ride is performed because its business model is premised on riders believing that they will receive the same overall customer experience regardless of the driver that they are matched with. Meanwhile, Uber chooses to exercise such little public-facing control over *when* drivers work because (1) it advances Uber’s narrative that drivers are independent contractors and, thereby, (2) allows Uber to avoid the costs of maintaining a labor force. This permits Uber to construct the work arrangement around the smallest increment possible (the ride itself) so Uber keeps costs down during periods of low demand, while allowing it to scale up quickly to meet periods when demand is high (such as during the morning commute or after a large concert). *Lowman*, 235 A.3d at 307 (“that Uber allows all of its licensed drivers to work at their own discretion [] evidences a decision that there are a sufficient number of individuals with access to the Driver App to ensure that, despite erratic schedules, there will always be a driver available to service passengers requesting Uber’s service”).

65. Uber also points to incentives, which it uses to increase the supply of drivers available to provide rides at particular times or locations, as another indicia of its lack of direction and control over drivers’ behavior. But the operational reality is that incentives are another mechanism Uber can deploy to scale up the supply of drivers available to provide rides (as opposed maintaining a constant labor force), *see* AG FF 144, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] *see, e.g.*, [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] And like a driver's base pay, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

### **III. DRIVERS PERFORM SERVICES WITHIN THE “USUAL COURSE OF BUSINESS” OF UBER WHEN THEY TRANSPORT RIDERS**

66. Under Section 148B(a)'s second prong, Uber must establish that the service drivers perform falls “outside the usual course of the business.” G.L. c. 149, § 148B(a)(2). The controlling interpretation of Section 148B(a)'s second prong is set forth by the SJC in *Sebago*, 471 Mass. at 333-36, and further discussed by the Appeals Court in *Carey v. GateHouse Media Massachusetts Inc.*, 92 Mass. App. Ct. 801 (2018). Although there is “[n]o single test [that] controls the [“outside the usual course of business] inquiry,” *GateHouse*, 92 Mass. App. Ct. at 805, the two courts have collectively identified three factors that bear on the outcome: (1) whether the service the individual is performing is necessary to the putative employer's business or merely incidental; (2) how the business self-describes itself; and (3) what other arguments the putative employer advanced. *Sebago*, 471 Mass. at 333-36 (addressing the first two factors); *GateHouse*, 92 Mass. App. Ct. at 805-11 (discussing all three factors).

#### **A. Uber's Ridesharing Business is Directly Dependent on the Rides that Drivers Perform.**

67. The primary factor in the usual course of business inquiry is whether the service the worker is performing is necessary to the business of the employing unit or merely incidental. *Sebago*, 471 Mass. at 333; *GateHouse*, 92 Mass. App. Ct. at 807. For the reasons set out below, the services drivers perform are necessary, as opposed to merely incidental, to Uber's Ridesharing

business. *See infra*, CL 74-95. This conclusion is supported by the operational realities of Uber’s business model. *See infra*, CL 96-107.

**1. The Service an Individual is Performing is Necessary (as Opposed to Merely Incidental) to an Employer’s Usual Course of Business When the Business is Directly Dependent on the Success of the Worker’s Endeavors.**

68. In both *Sebago* and *GateHouse*, the critical factual inquiry that drove the courts’ necessary/incidental analysis was whether the business was “directly dependent on the success of the [workers’] endeavors.” *Sebago*, 471 Mass. at 334-35; *GateHouse*, 92 Mass. App. Ct. at 810. And significantly, the facts specific to this inquiry lead the two courts to divergent outcomes on Prong 2. *See Sebago*, 471 Mass. at 333-36 (“[T]he medallion owners’ leasing business is not directly dependent on the success of the drivers’ endeavors;” same for “radio associations” that dispatched drivers); *GateHouse*, 92 Mass. App. Ct. at 805-11 (opposite).

69. In *Sebago*, the SJC determined that taxi-drivers’ efforts were incidental to the usual course of business of both the medallion owners and the radio dispatch associations. *Sebago*, 471 Mass. at 334-35. The court’s conclusion as to the driver-medallion owner relationship was based on (a) the “medallion owners [ ] not [being] concerned with the result of the plaintiff[-taxi drivers’] operations” and (b) the drivers not remitting a percentage of their revenues to the companies. 471 Mass. at 334 (emphasis added). Turning to the driver-radio association relationship, the court looked at the “realities of the radio associations’ actual business operations” as well as the “regulatory framework in which those operations occur,” finding that the applicable regulation required medallion owners to purchase dispatch services regardless of how often those services were used in the transportation of passengers. *Id.* at 335 (“[T]he radio associations’ raison d’etre ... is to provide dispatch services to medallion owners—a service that is funded by medallion owners and only incidentally dependent on drivers.”).

70. By contrast, the Appeals Court determined that the newspaper delivery drivers in *GateHouse* fell on the necessary side of the necessary/incidental inquiry when determining the usual course of business of the defendant, a newspaper publisher. 92 Mass. App. Ct. at 805-11. The principal reason for the court's determination was that GateHouse was "very much concerned with the results of the [drivers'] operations" and its "*business [wa]s ... directly dependent on the success of drivers' endeavors.*" *Id.* at 810 (internal quotation omitted) (emphasis added). This was because the employer collected a per unit price such that the employer benefitted as the worker sold more. *Id.* at 809.

71. The Appeals Court also offered several additional suggestions for when a worker's services are likely to be more necessary than incidental to the employer's business. They included: (1) if the putative "employer takes an active role in securing [customers] for its drivers to service," *GateHouse*, 92 Mass. App. Ct. at 808; *see id.* at 809 ("GateHouse books customers for its drivers."); (2) if the putative employer "deals directly with potential customers" when securing customers for the drivers, *id.*; (3) if the putative employer employs a "staff in a sales department that works to increase [customers]," "retain existing [customers]," and "obtain new [customers] in particular territories, *id.* at 808-09; (4) if the putative employer actively encourages drivers to generate additional customers, *id.* at 809 (providing free samples and "bount[ies] for each subscription [drivers] obtain); (5) if the customer pays the putative employer directly (as opposed to the employee), *id.*; (6) if the customer provides specific instructions/complaints to the putative employer (as opposed to the driver directly), with the putative employer then "conveying this information to the drivers" via a "system," *id.*; and (7) if the putative employer maintains "contractual disincentives to poor delivery service, as well as contractual incentives for expanding delivery service to new customers, *id.* at 810.

72. In addition to addressing case-specific facts, both *Sebago* and *GateHouse* discussed the “instructive” distinction between necessary and incidental services set out in two contrasting exemplar cases discussed in the section of the Attorney General’s 2008 advisory on the meaning of Section 148B’s second prong. *Sebago*, 471 Mass. at 333-34; *GateHouse*, 92 Mass. App. Ct. at 808 (the exemplars “further illuminate[] the distinction between necessary and incidental services”). The two exemplars were (1) a limousine company where drivers “leased” the limousines (“necessary”) and (2) a taxi company where drivers leased medallions (“incidental”). The services were described as necessary to the employer’s usual course of business where limousine drivers “picked up customers who had ‘booked’ limousine services with [the putative employer]” and “*paid a percentage of their commissions to [the putative employer], thus establishing a financial interdependence, or a direct financial stake with the limousine company.*” *Id.* at 808 (quoting *Sebago*, 471 Mass. at 334) (emphasis added). By contrast, a driver’s services were depicted as incidental to the putative employer’s usual course of business where the driver paid flat fees to lease the taxi medallions, medallion owners were “not concerned with the operation of the cabs or the results of their operation,” and those owners’ “leasing business [was] not directly dependent on the success of the drivers’ endeavors.” *Sebago*, 471 Mass. at 333-34; *GateHouse*, 92 Mass. App. Ct. at 808 (“drivers rendered no services for” the medallion-leasing businesses).

**2. Drivers’ Services are Necessary, as Opposed to Merely Incidental, to Uber Because Uber’s Business is Directly Dependent on the Success of the Drivers’ Endeavors.**

73. For the seven reasons that follow, application of the *Sebago* and *GateHouse* factors compels a conclusion that drivers’ services are necessary (as opposed to merely incidental) to Uber’s Ridesharing business.

**a. Uber collects a per-ride fee such that it benefits as drivers perform more rides.**

74. Uber's business is directly dependent on the success of drivers' performance of rides where Uber's revenue directly relies on the completion of rides by drivers, such that its revenue increases as drivers perform more rides. *See GateHouse*, 92 Mass. App. Ct. at 809-10 (newspaper delivery drivers work in the usual course of publisher's business where its revenue increases as drivers perform more work); *see also Sebago*, 471 Mass. at 333-34 (discussing *O'Hare-Midway Limo. Serv., Inc. v. Baker*, 232 Ill. App. 3d 108, 111 (Ill. App. Ct. 1992) (drivers' payment of percentage of commissions to limousine company established a "financial interdependence" or "direct financial stake" indicative of employment relationship)). Indeed, the trial evidence conclusively establishes that Uber collects a per-ride price such that its revenue is directly dependent on drivers completing rides. Uber's Ridesharing revenue is derived from the fees Uber collects from Ridesharing trips completed by drivers, comprising Uber's commission from the ride. AG FF 185. The amount of the fee, which is variable, is solely determined by Uber. AG FF 186-88. This alone is sufficient to show that Uber is "financial[ly] interdepend[ent]" with drivers. *See GateHouse*, 92 Mass. App. Ct. at 808 (Where newspaper publisher collected a per unit price such that it benefitted as newspaper delivery drivers sold more units, held that publisher was "very much concerned with the results of the [drivers'] operations" and its "*business [wa]s ... directly dependent on the success of drivers' endeavors.*") (emphasis added).

75. The revenue Uber garners from completed rides makes up a substantial portion of the company's overall revenue, landing anywhere between 39 and 91 percent of Uber's total reported revenue from 2016 through 2023. *See* AG FF 223-31. Most recently, in FY 2023, Uber's Ridesharing revenue made up 53.2% of its total reported revenue. AG FF 230. And Uber acknowledges that the natural consequence of it deriving its revenue from per-ride commissions

is that without riders requesting rides, and without drivers successfully completing them, “there’s not a whole lot of value being generated” for its business. AG FF 201.

76. Further demonstrating its reliance on the transportation service performed by drivers, Uber also values its Ridesharing business according to metrics like “Trips,” “Gross Bookings,” which measure the number of completed Ridesharing rides, and the total fares paid by riders on those completed rides. *See* AG FF 206, 283, 285 (discussing Gross Bookings in SEC Filings, Quarterly Earnings Calls), 261 (Trips). Uber aims to maximize gross bookings and completed trips, as Uber’s revenue margin is a direct “output” of the total rider fares that are generated by rides performed and completed by drivers. *See* FF 285 (On Uber’s Q4 2021 Earnings Call, Mr. Khosrowshahi stating, “So the revenue margin that you see, it’s more of an output. Like at the end of the month or at the end of the quarter, we like look at our revenue margins, but we’re managing to the business. We’re trying to maximize *gross bookings*. We’re trying to maximize *trips*. And frankly, we’re going to -- we’re trying to maximize *throughput*.”) (emphasis added).

**b. Uber takes an active role in securing customers for drivers to transport.**

77. That Uber “takes an active role in securing [customers] for its drivers to service,” including “book[ing] customers for its drivers,” is an additional indication that the rides drivers provide are necessary to Uber’s transportation business. *See GateHouse*, 92 Mass. App. Ct. at 808, 809. Courts routinely find that where a business contracts to provide customers a service, individuals who furnish that service are employees because they work within the employer’s “usual course of business.” *See, e.g., Awuah v. Coverall N. Am., Inc.*, 707 F. Supp. 2d 80, 82, 84-85 (D. Mass. 2010) (janitorial workers employees of company that contracted with, and directly billed, customers for cleaning services the misclassified workers performed); *Martins v. 3PD, Inc.*, 2013 WL 1320454, at \*13- 14 (D. Mass. 2013) (delivery drivers’ services within usual course of

business for company that held itself out as a last-mile delivery company and directly contracted with customers to provide delivery services); *Rainbow Dev.*, 2005 WL 3543770, at \*3 (company that “provide[d] its customers with the [auto detailing] services that [its] employees perform[ed]” had misclassified those workers because, in part, without them the company “would cease to operate”).

78. Uber’s Ridesharing business consists of connecting riders in need of transportation with drivers who provide rides, through Uber’s App. Uber pre-arranges these rides by matching each rider to an available driver in the App. *See* AG FF 2. To create these rider-driver pairings, Uber uses a variety of real-time data, including the rider pickup location, the rider destination, the specific ride product they have chosen, the pickup location they have provided, driver location, the number and location of drivers in the area, and whether those drivers are immediately available or close to dropping off another rider. AG FF 82.

79. Crucial to Uber’s ability to persuade riders to request rides on its App are ride quality metrics that speak to the reliability of rides provided on its App. AG FF 377, 395. In its public statements about this matching process, Uber informs riders that it aims to reduce the average pickup time for riders and increase the reliability of all rides provided on its App. AG FF 81. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

80. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] As completed rides are the only way that Uber generates revenue, this indicates that in booking riders for its drivers, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

81. Additionally, the total number of riders who use Uber's Ridesharing app to receive a completed ride from a driver, a metric that Uber refers to as MAPCs, is a key factor in driving Uber's gross bookings. AG FF 251-252 (defining and discussing MAPCs). This is borne out in Uber's financial results that it provides to investors, showing quarter-after-quarter that Uber's gross bookings increase as MAPCs increase, and decrease where MAPCs decrease. AG FF 253-258. As a result, Uber's revenue is also directly related to the number of riders using Uber's Ridesharing App to obtain rides from point A to point B. AG FF 253-258, 285.

**c. Uber employs a sales department that works to attract riders to its App.**

82. Given how critical the recruitment of riders to its Ridesharing App is, Uber devotes significant resources towards providing rider incentives, discounts, and ride promotions, such as reduced fares on its Ridesharing products or consumer referral programs, to acquire, engage, and retain riders to its App. AG FF 259. Like the employer in *GateHouse*, Uber thus takes an active role in efforts to "increase [customers]," "retain existing [customers]," and "obtain new [customers] in particular territories." *GateHouse*, 92 Mass. App. Ct. at 808-809.

83. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]. During the period of 2017 through 2023, Uber marketed its Ridesharing App to Massachusetts residents as a source for "all of [their] everyday transportation needs," highlighting the convenience, reliability, and efficiency of these services. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

**d. Uber deals directly with potential rider customers when securing riders for the drivers.**

84. In soliciting and booking riders for drivers, Uber deals directly with riders at all points of the ride. *See GateHouse*, 92 Mass. App. Ct. at 808-09. Both riders and drivers interact

with Uber's App in order to request rides (riders), or provide rides (drivers), from point A to point B. *See* AG FF 2, 48, 83. When a rider opens the App to start "shopping" for a ride, Uber provides the riders a list of available services (*e.g.*, UberX, UberXL, Uber Comfort, Uber Black), [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

85. In requesting a ride, riders provide specific instructions to Uber, who then conveys the information to drivers throughout the process: upon request, the rider lets Uber know of their selected product type, and Uber matches the rider with drivers who provide that ride product; upon pairing the rider with a potential driver, Uber provides the driver the approximate pick-up and destination of the rider; upon acceptance of the request by the driver, Uber provides the exact pick-up location of the rider; upon pick-up, Uber provides the driver with the rider's exact destination address; and upon drop-off, the rider informs Uber of the payment method they wish to use, and that payment is processed by Uber's App and third-party contractors. *See* AG FF 33-49.

86. The extent to which drivers are involved in the ride request process is limited to receiving ride requests from Uber in the App, pressing a button in the App to inform Uber that they accept a given request, picking up the rider and transporting them to their desired destination, and informing Uber that they have completed the ride upon drop-off. *See* AG FF 33-49.

**e. Riders pay Uber directly, and Uber unilaterally sets the prices of rides and driver earnings.**

87. Riders pay Uber directly (as opposed to drivers) for completed rides, and Uber exercises exclusive control over the payment process. *See GateHouse*, 92 Mass. App. Ct. at 809 (that customer pays the putative employer directly, as opposed to the employee, is an additional factor showing services were more necessary than incidental). Payments from riders are transmitted directly to an account established by Uber, from which Uber's third-party payment

contractors disburse driver earnings at the direction of Uber after determining Uber's share/cut. AG FF 42-48. Much like employees, the only portion of the rider payment that "100% belongs to [drivers]" and is not subject to deductions for Uber's fees is the optional tip that riders may elect to provide to drivers through Uber's App. AG FF 48; *see GateHouse*, 92 Mass. App. Ct. at 808 (citing *O'Hare-Midway Limousine Serv., Inc. v. Baker*, 232 Ill. App. 3d 108, 173 (1992)) (the fact that limousine drivers "paid a percentage of their commissions to [the employer]" showed a "financial interdependence," or a "direct financial stake" with the employer).

88. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]. And it does so in a way that both (1) optimizes for the number of completed rides, which generate revenue for its business, and (2) optimizes for its take rate (*i.e.* profit) from each ride. AG FF 113-138. To generate the optimal value from the rides that drivers perform, Uber relies on sophisticated pricing algorithms to determine the fee it takes from each ride (*i.e.* the differential between the rider price and the driver earnings). AG FF 106. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

**f. Riders provide their complaints and feedback to Uber directly, who conveys this information to drivers via its ratings system.**

89. Uber also deals directly with customer complaints and feedback, as it limits any post-ride interaction between the rider and the driver. *See GateHouse*, 92 Mass. App. Ct. at 809 (finding drivers performed work in usual course of business where the customer provided specific

instructions and complaints to the putative employer, with the employer then “conveying this information to the drivers” via a “system.”). At the end of each ride, riders are prompted to rate the driver and provide additional feedback. AG FF 55. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

**g. Uber uses driver incentives and disincentives to manage its labor supply in order to meet the needs of its rider customers.**

90. Consistent with the trial evidence that shows the customer for Uber’s Ridesharing business is the rider, *see* CL 73-89, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] *See GateHouse*, 92 Mass. App. Ct. at 809-810 (drivers’ services are necessary to putative employer’s business where the employer actively encourages drivers to generate additional customers, and maintains “contractual disincentives to poor delivery service”).

91. Using financial incentives such as driver surge pricing and planned driver incentives, Uber encourages its drivers to drive at times, places, and frequencies that are needed to meet rider demand.

92. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Uber’s ability to incentivize driver availability in response to high rider demand directly affects its bottom-line—demonstrating this connection,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

93. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Uber plans these incentive programs on an annual and monthly basis, based on historical data regarding how many trips will need to happen during a given period, how much rider demand is going to grow, and how much driver supply will need to grow in response to it.

AG FF 218. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

94. Further demonstrating its management of driver labor supply to optimize the rider experience, Uber makes significant investments to attract, motivate, and retain drivers who offer a level of customer service that meets Uber's desired standard through its Uber Pro rewards program. [REDACTED] Under Uber Pro, drivers who meet certain star ratings, points (with each ride completed generating points), cancellation rate, and acceptance rate thresholds set by Uber can unlock certain rewards related to the work they do to provide rides. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Uber understands that the quality of customer service by drivers has a significant impact on whether riders continue using the Uber App, over any other form of transportation; and more productive drivers are more valuable to Uber

because they drive consistently, accept and complete a higher portion of rides, especially during surge-pricing periods, and choose Uber over any other earning opportunity. AG FF 157.

95. In sum, the trial evidence establishes that not only is Uber directly dependent on the success of drivers' endeavors but also that Uber takes an active, controlling, role in coordinating all material aspects of drivers' transportation of riders. Uber is therefore much more than a platform where drives connect with rider, and drivers' services are necessary, as opposed to merely incidental, to the company's usual course of business.

**B. Uber's Self-Description is Consistent with its Operational Realities and Further Indicates that its Usual Course of Business is in Transportation.**

96. Another factor in the necessary/incidental determination is the employer's self-description of its business. *See Sebago*, 471 Mass. at 333 ("We have recognized that a purported employer's own definition of its business is indicative of the usual course of that business."); *GateHouse*, 92 Mass. App. Ct. at 805 (citing *Athol*, 439 Mass. at 175) ("[T]he manner in which a business defines itself is relevant to determining its usual course of business."). But importantly, a business' self-description is a *secondary* factor that "do[es] not override the realities of [its] actual business operations or the regulatory framework in which those operations occur." *Sebago*, 471 Mass. at 335; *see also GateHouse*, 92 Mass. App. Ct. at 805 n.9 (citing *Sebago*, 471 Mass. at 335) ("wording of defendant entities' advertising, although helpful to [employees'] claim of employee status, did 'not override the realities of the [entities'] actual business operations.").

97. As part of the self-description analysis in *GateHouse*, the Court evaluated more than just the employer's self-description. 92 Mass. App. Ct. at 805. It also considered "how [the employer] advertised and otherwise held themselves out," the company's "annual corporate filings," and "its agreements with [the workers]." *Id.* at 805-06. And the court then went on to assess the meaning of the descriptions, doing so in the context of the operational realities of the

putative employer's business. *Id.* at 806. *See Sebago*, 471 Mass. at 335 (a company's self-description should match "what the company does").

98. Here, Uber's self-descriptions in its regulatory filings with the SEC and in investors calls relating to disclosures set forth in those filings; public statements by key executives; and branding and marketing materials are consistent with the operational realities of its usual course of business described above.<sup>14</sup>

99. In its regulatory filings with the SEC, Uber confirms the operational realities described above. It lays out that revenue generation from its Ridesharing business is dependent on fees collected from completed rides, AG FF 183-198, 202-209; identifies the significant revenue that these fees mean for Uber's bottom line, AG FF 223-231; describes the value of its Ridesharing business using a series of metrics that concern the completion of trips, AG FF 199-200, 248-264; and acknowledges that it manipulates its "take rate" on rides, AG FF 210-222. Uber also states that its mission is to "ignite opportunity by setting the world in motion." AG FF 265.

100. In statements during earnings calls, Uber's CEO and other high-ranking executives have consistently portrayed Uber as in the business of transportation, with their drivers performing the service (on-demand rides from Point A to Point B) that Uber offers to riders. Uber executives, for instance, routinely tell earnings-call participants that Ridesharing revenues are a primary source of Uber's value. *See* AG FF 283. They also mention that Uber takes a share of each ride a driver provides and that this benefits Uber's bottom line. *See* AG FF 284. Similarly, they describe how Uber is involved in and/or focused on transportation, emphasize the control Uber exerts over the quality and reliability of the ride itself, and discuss Uber's control over various aspects of the

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<sup>14</sup> For a publicly traded company, this self-description can come, in part, through statements made by company representatives to the company's investors and to the general public.

ridesharing market (e.g., ride pricing, driver earnings, and driver behavior). *See* AG FF 288-90.<sup>15</sup> They also focus on metrics that underscore the relationship between Ridesharing bookings and Uber's financial outlook, *see* AG FF 285; draw attention to the number of drivers on the company's network as a means of emphasizing the superiority of Uber's supply of drivers, *see* AG FF 286;<sup>16</sup> and describe Uber's efforts to attract and retain drivers as "supply investments," *see* AG FF 287.<sup>17</sup>

101. Uber's CEO and other high-ranking executives have made similar statements about the operational realities of Uber's business in public forums. These include describing Uber as a source of transportation services, *see* AG FF 295,<sup>18</sup> 296, 303, 309,<sup>19</sup> 311; identifying Uber's pricing power and/or control over pricing, *see* AG FF 305-06; portraying drivers as performing the transportation services—on-demand rides from point A to point B—that Uber offers to riders, *see* AG FF 295-96, 303; identifying drivers as driving for Uber and/or performing the

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<sup>15</sup> Two examples: 1) On Uber's Q3 2019 Earnings Call, Mr. Khosrowshahi stated, "Ultimately there's a lot of demand for our transportation and we're becoming kind of a more fundamental part of everyone's lives;" and 2) on Uber's Q1 2021 Earnings Call, Mr. Khosrowshahi stated, "As riders come back to platform, we're working hard to make sure that their second first trip is as magical as ever."

<sup>16</sup> On Uber's Q3 2021 Earnings Call, Mr. Khosrowshahi stating, "The results are clear: we've seen 10 consecutive weeks of active driver growth in the US, resulting in a *far better rider experience*." (emphasis added).

<sup>17</sup> On Uber's Q2 2023 Earnings Call, Mr. Khosrowshahi stating, "Our path to growth is centered on our ability to grow supply, and our focus on driver growth over the last several years has resulted in a significantly improved consumer experience."

<sup>18</sup> Mr. Khosrowshahi: "Uber is now about taking a car and I want Uber to be about getting from point A to B, whatever the best way from getting point A to B."

<sup>19</sup> Mr. Khosrowshahi: "As you know, Uber really was started on the rides business. This is the business of moving people around in cities with either cars or autos, motos, etc, depending on the local means of transportation."

transportation service essential to Uber's business, *see* AG FF 301,<sup>20</sup> 311; depicting drivers as essential to the profitability and viability of Uber's Ridesharing business, *see* AG FF 299; and underscoring that Uber has become synonymous with on-demand transportation, *see* AG FF 295, 312, 315, 317. Uber's CEO, Dara Khosrowshahi, even said that "[t]he face of Uber is the person sitting in the front seat ...." AG FF 299.

102. Uber's branding conveys a similar, transportation-focused message. Indeed, from 2017 through the present, Uber has consistently described itself through its public facing brand communications, including its succession of mission statements and marketing efforts, as a provider of transportation services. AG FF 320-358. The successive iterations of Uber's publicly stated brand mission, variously, "to make transportation as reliable as running water everywhere for everyone," "to bring transportation—for everyone, everywhere," and "to reimagine the way the world moves for the better" have been foundational to the company's marketing efforts. AG FF 333, 336, 339, 343, 347, 350, 355. Similarly, through its marketing efforts, Uber has established itself in the public consciousness as a provider of safe, reliable, and convenient transportation. AG FF 333, 336, 339, 343, 347, 350, 355. To this end, its advertising has consistently and effectively sought to position Uber as a source for purchasing transportation services, as well as offering an attractive employment opportunity to the potential drivers needed to provide such services. AG FF 334-335, 337-338, 340-342, 344-346, 348-349, 351-354, 356-358.

**C. Uber is Much More than a "Platform Company" or Intermediary.**

103. Though Uber attempts to assert in this case its core business is merely to furnish a platform for drivers and riders to connect, this contention rests on "a false dichotomy between the administrative and operational aspects of their business." *Sebago*, 471 Mass. at 330. *See*

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<sup>20</sup> Mr. Khosrowshahi: "I care if many more drivers drive for me, but they can also drive for Lyft."

*O'Connor*, 82 F. Supp. 3d at 1141-44 (“Uber does not simply sell software; it sells rides” and would not survive as a business without its drivers).

104. The SJC recently rejected the “we’re just a platform” defense in an analogous context due to the company’s level of involvement in the provision of the service. *Mass. Port Auth. v. Turo, Inc.*, 487 Mass. 235, 246 (2021). In that case, Turo described itself as “an online platform” that connects vehicle owners with persons seeking to rent cars on a short-term basis. *Turo*, 487 Mass. at 237. The SJC rejected Turo’s claim that, because it was just a platform, it did not aid or abet the vehicle owners’ trespass at Logan Airport when the owners dropped off rental vehicles there in violation of Massport regulations. *Id.* at 246. The Court concluded that “by providing the online platform that identifies Logan Airport as a pick-up or drop-off location, providing substantial liability insurance, and collecting payments from users for transactions occurring at Logan Airport[,]” Turo “actively participated in or substantially assisted in the ongoing trespass” at Logan. *Id.* at 246.

105. As in *Turo*, Uber does far more than act as a mere “go-between.” *Turo*, 487 Mass. at 242-43. For individual rides, Uber controls almost every element of the transaction, including screening drivers, matching drivers to riders, setting the price of rides, collecting rider fares, setting drivers’ earnings and its own share, remitting payment to drivers, monitoring the ride and activities of drivers, and serving as the point of contact (and decision maker) for rider complaints regarding drivers. *See* CL 37-58. This degree of involvement, and the overarching fact that Uber relies on what drivers do (transporting riders), explains why so many other courts applying the prong of California’s misclassification law that is nearly identical to prong 2 of Section 148B(a) have rejected “platform” defenses by ridesharing entities like Uber and Lyft in other misclassification cases. *See People v. Uber Techs., Inc.*, 56 Cal. App. 5th 266, 294-95 (Cal. Ct. App. 2020) (repudiating platform defense and collecting cases); *see also James v. Uber Tech., Inc.*, 338 F.R.D.

123, 137 (N.D. Cal. 2021) (“Uber and Uber’s drivers are both in the business of transportation” because “drivers’ work of driving customers from one place to another is central to Uber’s business of providing customers rides from one place to another . . . .”); *Cotter v. Lyft, Inc.*, 60 F. Supp. 3d 1067, 1078 (N.D. Cal. 2015) (Lyft’s assertion that its drivers perform services only for their riders, while Lyft is an uninterested bystander of sorts, merely furnishing a platform that allows drivers and riders to connect . . . is obviously wrong.”).

106. As well, both the SJC and the First Circuit have rejected a close cousin of the platform argument in analytically similar circumstances, concluding that Section 148B(a)’s second prong precludes package delivery couriers for companies that arranged deliveries from being treated as independent contractors because the couriers are acting in the usual course of business for those companies when they deliver packages. *See Chambers v. RDI Logistics, Inc.*, 476 Mass. 95, 102 (2016) (“A delivery driver for a motor carrier necessarily will be performing services within ‘the usual course of business of the employer’ whenever . . . delivery services are part of its usual course of business.”); *Sebago*, 471 Mass. at 330 (quoting *Mass. Delivery Ass’n v. Coakley*, 769 F.3d 11, 21 n.4 (1st Cir. 2014) (“[C]ouriers deliver packages for delivery companies. There can be no dispute that they act in the course of business for the delivery companies, *even if one performs the deliveries and the other arranges the deliveries.*”)) (emphasis added). Because it makes no analytical difference under Section 148B(a) that drivers transport passengers, and not packages, and that Uber arranges the transportation, and not the deliveries, prong two “requires that [Uber] use employees rather than independent contractors to [perform] those services.” *Chambers*, 476 Mass. at 102.

107. Finally, Uber’s “platform” argument is inconsistent with Massachusetts law, which specifies that transportation network companies like Uber and drivers perform the same service—a prearranged ride. *See* G.L. c. 159A1/2, § 3(a) (“All transportation network companies and

transportation network drivers shall provide services in the form of a pre-arranged ride using a digital network.”); *see also id.* at § 1 (defining “services” as “the offering or providing of pre-arranged rides for compensation or on a promotional basis to riders ... through the [TNC]’s digital network.”). In other words, the very legislative act that Uber contends allows it to escape its obligations under Section 148B establishes that drivers are performing services as part of Uber’s usual course of business.

#### **IV. DRIVERS DO NOT PERFORM RIDES AS AN INDEPENDENT ENTREPRENEURIAL ENTERPRISE.**

108. The third prong of Section 148B(a) requires that the individual is “customarily engaged in an independently established trade, occupation, profession or business of the same nature as that involved in the service performed.” G.L. c. 149, § 148B(a)(3). The critical inquiry is “whether ‘the worker is capable of performing the service to anyone wishing to avail themselves of the services or, conversely, whether the nature of the business compels the worker to depend on a single employer for the continuation of the services.’” *Weiss*, 97 Mass. App. Ct. at 9-10 (quoting *Sebago*, 471 Mass. at 336). The “insignia” of a worker being customarily engaged in an independently established business is if the worker has “a freestanding, independent entrepreneurial business in which [they have] a proprietary interest.” *Boston Bicycle*, 56 Mass. App. Ct. at 480.

109. In *Weiss*, the Appeals Court explained that “[t]he determination whether this statutory prong is satisfied ‘must be based upon a comprehensive analysis of the totality of the relevant facts and circumstances of the working relationship,’” with “[n]o one factor [being] outcome-determinative.” *Weiss*, 97 Mass. App. Ct. at 10 (quoting *Boston Bicycle*, 56 Mass. App. Ct. at 484). Significantly, the court emphasized that the facts should be viewed through the lens of the “*reality*” of the worker’s circumstances. *Id.* (emphasis added).

110. For the reason explained below, Uber cannot satisfy its burden under Section 148B(a)'s third prong because the trial evidence demonstrates that drivers do not "perform services as an entrepreneur" and are instead very much dependent on Uber for virtually all aspects of their work. *See Weiss*, 97 Mass. App. Ct. at 10.

**A. Drivers Do Not Exercise Meaningful Entrepreneurial Control Over the Provision of Their Services.**

111. The trial evidence demonstrates that the relationship between Uber and drivers is not "independent" but rather than "an intertwining and an interdependent working relationship between [drivers] and [Uber]." *Boston Bicycle*, 56 Mass. App. Ct. at 481.

112. First, Uber provides "essential equipment" to drivers, namely, the driver App. *See Boston Bicycle*, 56 Mass. App. Ct. at 482 (interdependence between putative employer and worker evident where putative employer provides a worker "essential equipment"). To be eligible to receive a ride request through Uber, drivers must have access to Uber's driver App. AG FF 33. This is because Uber, through the App, offers ride requests to drivers, orchestrates sequence of the ride, facilitates communications between the rider and driver, effectuates the payment collection process, and oversees the rating process. *See supra*, CL 37-58.

113. Second, Uber sets the prices for customers and the earnings for workers. *Boston Bicycle*, 56 Mass. App. Ct. at 483 (company's setting of the compensation to workers and prices to customers are indicia of interdependence). *Compare Athol*, 439 Mass. at 182 (Prong 3 satisfied where newspaper delivery carriers could set their own prices for the newspaper they sold) *with Coverall N. Am., Inc. v. Com'r of Div. of Unemp't Assist.*, 447 Mass. 852, 858 (2006) (worker an employee for the purposes of unemployment where her employer controlled the prices she charged). Much like *Boston Bicycle*, Uber sets the "rates paid to drivers ... and sets the prices charged for [services]." *Id.* In fact, drivers are much more akin to the low-wage janitorial

“franchisees” that the SJC found to be employees in *Coverall*, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] *Coverall*, 447 Mass. at 858-59 (claimant an employee where she was “required to allow [the employer] to negotiate contracts and pricing directly with clients, bill clients, and [to follow] a daily cleaning plan”). As well, Uber controls the process for collecting and processing the payment, including collecting the fare amount from the driver, collecting Uber’s share of the ride (*i.e.*, the service fee that forms Uber’s revenue on the ride), and providing the driver with their share of the ride. AG FF 42-47. And the primary way that drivers can earn more money from driving is to complete more rides and/or to seek to achieve incentives offered by Uber (*i.e.*, drive when it is busiest). AG FF 139-141.

114. Third, Uber has the unilateral right to end its relationship with drivers. *Boston Bicycle*, 56 Mass. App. Ct. at 483 (citing *AFM Messenger Serv. Inc. v. Dept. of Emp’t Sec.*, 198 Ill.2d 380 (2001)) (company’s “right to terminate a [worker] and end the relationship for any reason” is another indicator that a worker is not independent from the putative employer).<sup>21</sup> Here, Uber reviews ratings feedback about drivers and can deactivate drivers without warning, including in the middle of a day based upon a poor rating from a rider or myriad other reasons. AG FF 55-60, 69.

115. Finally, Uber, and not the driver, coordinates with riders concerning all material aspects of the ride. *Boston Bicycle*, 56 Mass. App. Ct. at 483; *see also Coverall*, 447 Mass. at 858-

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<sup>21</sup> In *Boston Bicycle*, the Appeals Court relied on *AFM*, an Illinois Supreme Court decision where, among other factors, the putative employer had the ability to terminate their relationship with drivers at any time. 56 Mass. App. Ct. at 483. Of particular significance in *AMF* was that “a driver’s business existed only by reason of the driver’s employment with [the employer], which was subject to termination, at which time the driver would be unemployed.” *Id.*

59 (“[T]he claimant only cleaned at the locations Coverall provided and was provided with a plan of action and directed to follow it by Coverall supervisors...”). Here, Uber handles ride requests by riders, determines the price for riders, and matches riders with drivers. AG FF 35-37 (ride requests); 78-94 (matching); 95-138 (pricing). It then provides drivers with directions to pick up the riders, tells drivers the riders’ destinations, and monitors the rides for quality and safety. AG FF 38-41; 74-77 (data monitoring). After the ride, Uber processes the ride payments and prompts riders to rate drivers. AG FF 42-47 (payment processing); FF 55-73 (ratings). And Uber does all this to build its brand as well as its ongoing relationships with riders. AG FF 377-78.

116. For all these reasons, drivers are “compelled to rely heavily” on Uber to be matched with riders. *Coverall*, 447 Mass. at 858–859; *see also Boston Bicycle*, 56 Mass. App. Ct. at 482 (“[employer] did not make an adequate showing that [worker] held himself out as an independent businessman performing courier services for any community of potential customers”).

**B. Drivers are an Integral Part of Uber’s Ridesharing Business, and Without them Uber Could Not Operate.**

117. Further reflecting the “dependent intertwining” between Uber and drivers is the trial evidence showing that drivers are undeniably an “integral part of [Uber’s Ridesharing] business,” as without them Uber’s Ridesharing business “could not operate.” *Boston Bicycle*, 56 Mass. App. Ct. at 483. This is true for at least four reasons: *first*, for reasons explained extensively *supra* as well as in the Attorney General’s Proposed Findings of Fact, nearly all of Uber’s revenue from its Ridesharing business is derived from the fees that Uber collects from every ride completed by drivers. *See supra*, CL 74-75; AG FF 183-207. Uber does not generate revenue from Ridesharing but for drivers performing rides. AG FF 192, 201, 202.

118. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

119. *Third*, what follows from the above two points is that Uber directly benefits from drivers' fare volume, because as drivers perform more rides, Uber earns more revenue. This is because as gross bookings (*i.e.* total rider fares) increase, Uber's revenue also increases (as a direct output of gross bookings). *See* AG FF 204-08, 253-57, 285 (Uber's CEO Dara Khosrowshahi stating on its Q4 2021 Earnings Call, "So the revenue margin that you see, it's more of an output. Like at the end of the month or at the end of the quarter, we like look at our revenue margins, but we're managing to the business. We're trying to maximize gross bookings. We're trying to maximize trips. And frankly, we're going to – we're trying to maximize throughput.").

120. *Finally*, without drivers, Uber would simply not be able to meet the demand for rides on the platform. Indeed, Uber frequently touts its superior driver supply as a reason for its competitive advantage. Its underlying business model strategy is to achieve the greatest "liquidity network effect," which allows it to remain competitive on rider prices and have a higher margin on each ride. AG FF 233-247, 286. And this liquidity network effect starts with a supply of drivers; this means that when Uber launches its Ridesharing product in new markets, it *starts* by onboarding drivers to provide those Ridesharing services. AG FF 236. As driver supply increases, wait times

for rides lower, and rider demand increases—ultimately resulting in more completed rides on Uber’s App, and more revenue for Uber. AG FF 237-247, 204-08, 253-57, 285.

**C. Uber Precludes Drivers from Taking Steps to Establish and Promote Themselves as Independent Entrepreneurial Businesses.**

121. The absence of “proprietary interest in a going concern which [can be] sold or transferred” further highlights the lack of a freestanding, independent entrepreneurial business. *Boston Bicycle*, 56 Mass. App. Ct. at 481. Drivers lack a proprietary interest here for at least four reasons.

122. *First*, drivers providing on-demand transportation and delivery services to riders largely depend on apps like Uber for earnings opportunities. *Boston Bicycle*, 56 Mass. App. Ct. at 483 n.16 (citing *AFM*, 198 Ill.2d at 380) (drivers were [not] able to operate their ‘delivery businesses’ without the benefit of a relationship with AFM, or another messenger service like AFM”).

123. *Second*, Uber treats every driver as an independent contractor. AG FF 21. It does not give any individualized consideration to whether or why a driver is an independent contractor. *Id.* Nor does it determine if a driver incorporated as a business as opposed to an individual work. AG FF 22. And drivers have no opportunity to employ or subcontract another to drive for them (as a typical entrepreneurial business might). CL 38. *See Lowman*, 235 A.3d at 306 (Uber’s subcontracting prohibition “strongly militates against a finding that [a driver] is independently engaged in a business”).

124. *Third*, Uber offered no facts establishing that *all* drivers have a proprietary interest in any independent business that can be developed, sold, or transferred. Rather, the only value that most drivers are able to generate from their business is the earnings they receive when they perform a ride. *See* AG FF 96-97. Drivers’ relationship with Uber is therefore much more akin to an

employer-employee relationship, where the employee performs work in return for remuneration by the employer.<sup>22</sup>

125. *Fourth*, drivers have limited access to rider information such that they could develop an independent clientele for their transportation services outside of the Uber App. Drivers, for instance, must communicate with riders through Uber’s App, receive limited information from Uber about the identity of their “customer,” and do not have the ability to link comments and/or ratings that riders have left back to the rider’s name. *See* AG FF 49, 75. Even when a rider leaves a driver a tip, Uber does not even identify the rider that did so to the driver. *See id.* at FF 48.

**V. THE COURT SHOULD ENTER AN INJUNCTION TO ENSURE THAT UBER AFFORDS DRIVERS THE BENEFITS AND PROTECTIONS THAT FLOW FROM BEING CLASSIFIED AS AN EMPLOYEE UNDER SECTION 148B(a).**

126. In this litigation, the Attorney General seeks a declaratory judgment that Uber drivers are, and have been since at least 2017, Uber’s employees under G.L. c. 149, § 148B(a), and if it prevails, a permanent injunction requiring Uber to treat its Massachusetts-based drivers as employees for the purposes of the wage-and-hour protection-ns afforded employees under G.L. c. 149 & 151. *See* Complaint, Dkt. No. 1 at 16; Addendum 8-9 (Attorney General’s Proposed Judgment). Where Uber has misclassified drivers since at least 2017, an injunction is warranted to ensure that Uber will obey the law and that drivers will receive the substantial benefits that they are entitled to as employees.

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<sup>22</sup> Even for the small percentage of drivers that operate an independent business for the reasons described *supra*, many of those businesses are much more akin to the low-wage, janitorial “franchisees” that the SJC found to be employees in *Coverall*, 447 Mass. at 858-59 (claimant an employee where she was “required to allow [the employer] to negotiate contracts and pricing directly with clients, bill clients, and [to follow] a daily cleaning plan”).

**A. When the Attorney General Requests Injunctive Relief, the Court Need Only Conclude that Such Relief is in the Public Interest.**

127. The Attorney General brought this action in the public interest as part of her statutory mandate to enforce Massachusetts laws governing wages, hours, and other aspects of the employment relationship. *See, e.g.*, G.L. 149, §§ 2, 5, 27C, and 148-150; G.L. c. 151, § 19; *see also* G.L. c. 12, § 10 (authorizing the Attorney General to “take cognizance of all violations of the law ... affecting the general welfare of the people,” and to bring “such criminal or civil proceedings ... as [she] may deem to be for the public interest”). In a proceeding such as this one, where the Attorney General is acting under her “statutory obligation . . . to protect the public interest,” the standard for obtaining injunctive relief differs from the standard typically applied to a private litigant.<sup>23</sup> *Com. v. ELM Med. Labs., Inc.*, 33 Mass. App. Ct. 71, 83 (1992) (permanent injunction); *Att’y Gen. v. Bach*, 81 Mass. App. Ct. 1126, \*2 (2012) (permanent injunction). To that end, the court need only conclude that a permanent injunction would be in the public interest. *ELM Med. Labs.*, 33 Mass. App. Ct. at 83 (“The injunction, without doubt, is designed to protect the public interest. In cases brought by the Attorney General under the Consumer Protection Act, that is the proper standard.”); *Bach*, 81 Mass. App. Ct. at 1126 \*2 (quoting *Com. v. Mass. CRINC*, 392 Mass. 79, 88 (1984)) (“Where the AG requests injunctive relief, a judge need only conclude that such relief would be ‘in the public interest.’”); *see also* G.L. c. 149, § 2 (“The attorney general shall, except as otherwise specifically provided, enforce the provisions of this chapter, and *shall have all*

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<sup>23</sup> *See, e.g., Casual Male Retail Grp., Inc. v. Yarbrough*, 527 F. Supp. 2d 172, 179 (D. Mass. 2007) (to receive a permanent injunction, a private party plaintiff must show (1) it has prevailed on the merits; (2) it would suffer irreparable injury without a permanent injunction; (3) the balance of the harms is in its favor; and (4) there would be no adverse effect on the public interest).

*necessary powers therefor.*”) (emphasis added) & § 148B(e) (“Nothing in this section shall limit the availability of other remedies at law or equity.”).<sup>24</sup>

128. For the reasons explained below, a permanent injunction is warranted in this case because several significant public interests will be harmed if Uber is not permanently enjoined from misclassifying its drivers. Simply put, Uber should be required to follow the law.

**B. Achieving the Legislative Purpose of Section 148B—Protecting Employees from Being Deprived of the Benefits They are Entitled to Under the Law Due to Misclassification as Independent Contractors—is in the Public Interest.**

129. The Legislature, in enacting Section 148B, sought “to protect employees from being deprived of the benefits enjoyed by employees through their misclassification as independent contractors.” *Somers*, 454 Mass. at 592. “Proper classification is important to the determination of the protections afforded to an individual under the [Commonwealth’s Wage and Hour Laws].” *Patel*, 489 Mass. at 359. “Classification as an ‘employee’ generally entitles an individual to ... a minimum wage, G.L. c. 151, § 1; overtime pay, G.L. c. 151, § 1B; and a private cause of action to enforce these rights, along with the ability to recover the costs of litigation, attorney’s fees, and [treble damages].” *Id.* As well, it entitles the employee to earned sick leave under G.L. c. 149, § 148C, and protection against retaliation by employers, *see id.* § 148A.

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<sup>24</sup> The Attorney General need not establish that there would be no adverse effect on the public interest because an “injury to the legislatively prescribed public interest amounts to irreparable harm.” *Davis v. Cape Cod Hosp.*, 71 Mass. App. Ct. 1121 (2008); *see CRINC*, 392 Mass. at 88-89 (enforcement of law presumed to be in the public interest). In any event, as explained *infra*, it is well-understood that legislative policy behind Section 148B was to prevent misclassification of workers as well as harms it causes to workers, government entities, and law-abiding employers. *Somers*, 454 Mass. at 592; *see also Shell Oil Co. v. City of Revere*, 383 Mass. 682, 688 (1981) (quoting *Minn. v. Clover Leaf Cream. Co.*, 449 U.S. 456, 464 (1981)) (“legislative bodies ‘are not required to convince the courts of the correctness of their legislative judgments.’”).

130. In addition to depriving the misclassified worker of substantial employment-related rights, misclassification harms the Commonwealth, the federal government, and law-abiding employers. *Patel*, 489 Mass. at 359. As the SJC has explained:

Employers who misclassify employees as independent contractors enjoy what might be viewed as a windfall. Misclassification permits an employer to avoid its statutory obligations to its workforce. Misclassification further allows employers to shift certain financial burdens to the Commonwealth and the Federal Government.[] In addition, misclassification “gives an employer ... an unfair competitive advantage over employers who correctly classify their employees and bear the concomitant financial burden.”

*Id.* (quoting *Somers*, 454 Mass. at 593).

131. The Attorney General’s advisory on Section 148B, which has been repeatedly relied upon by the SJC, *see, e.g., Patel*, 489 Mass. at 388, makes a similar point, stating that “[t]he need for proper classification of individuals in the workplace is of paramount importance to the Commonwealth” and discussing how misclassification harms workers, the Commonwealth, taxpayers, and law-abiding business. AG Advisory 2008/1 at 1. So too do the Attorney General’s Labor Day Reports, which are issued to the public and contain guidance about the Commonwealth’s wage and hour laws. For instance, in her 2018 Labor Day Report, the Attorney General explained how employers who misclassify workers are able to evade myriad workplace protections, including those under the National Labor Relations Act and state wage and hour laws, at a great cost to workers, responsible employers, and states generally. 2018 Labor Day Report at 7 (2018).<sup>25</sup> Similarly, the Attorney General explained in her 2023 Labor Day Report that employees who are misclassified are deprived of the rights granted to them under these laws, including the right to receive all wages they are owed and to be paid on time, the right to minimum wages and overtime, protection against employer retaliation, and access to important employee

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<sup>25</sup> The Attorney General’s 2018 Labor Day Report is available at: <https://rb.gy/up9o2u>.

benefits. 2023 Labor Day Report at 18 (2023).<sup>26</sup> The 2023 Report also notes that misclassification is particularly common in gig economy work. *Id.*

132. Evincing the Commonwealth’s interest in preventing significant consequences of misclassification, in March 2008, Governor Deval Patrick signed Executive Order No. 499 establishing the Commonwealth’s Joint Task Force on the Underground Economy and Employee Misclassification. *See* Executive Order 499: Establish a Joint Enforcement Task Force on the Underground Economy and Employee Misclassification, March 12, 2008;<sup>27</sup> COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS JOINT ENFORCEMENT TASK FORCE ON THE UNDERGROUND ECONOMY AND EMPLOYEE MISCLASSIFICATION, Annual Report at 2 (2009).<sup>28</sup> One of the Joint Task Force’s primary purposes was to combat employee misclassification by identifying industries and sectors where employee misclassification was the most prevalent and to target members’ investigative and enforcement resources against those sectors, as well as transmit an annual report on the Task Forces activities during the preceding year. *Id.* at 35. Among other state agency members, the Attorney General’s Fair Labor Division was a member of the Joint Task Force. *Id.* at 34-35. Subsequently, on June 26, 2014, Chapter 144 “An Act Restoring the Minimum Wage and

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<sup>26</sup> The Attorney General’s 2023 Labor Day Report is available at: <https://rb.gy/vjq9a3>.

<sup>27</sup> Governor Patrick’s Executive Order is available at: <https://rb.gy/f6ik3b>.

<sup>28</sup> The Annual Reports of the Joint Task Force and the Council on the Underground Economy are available at:

<a href="https://tinyurl.com/mzy865p">https://tinyurl.com/mzy865p</a> (2009)	<a href="https://tinyurl.com/ey466abv">https://tinyurl.com/ey466abv</a> (2016)
<a href="https://tinyurl.com/s4mveh97">https://tinyurl.com/s4mveh97</a> (2010)	<a href="https://tinyurl.com/34vn76zr">https://tinyurl.com/34vn76zr</a> (2017)
<a href="https://rb.gy/etoobo">https://rb.gy/etoobo</a> (2011)	<a href="https://tinyurl.com/5fxecr9r">https://tinyurl.com/5fxecr9r</a> (2018)
<a href="https://shorturl.at/dogCK">https://shorturl.at/dogCK</a> (2012)	<a href="https://tinyurl.com/yvr9jkhz">https://tinyurl.com/yvr9jkhz</a> (2019)
<a href="https://tinyurl.com/mwjrnshj">https://tinyurl.com/mwjrnshj</a> (2013)	<a href="https://tinyurl.com/ybsy7pu2">https://tinyurl.com/ybsy7pu2</a> (2020)
<a href="https://tinyurl.com/238f3a56">https://tinyurl.com/238f3a56</a> (2014)	<a href="https://tinyurl.com/mtkw48h6">https://tinyurl.com/mtkw48h6</a> (2021)
<a href="https://tinyurl.com/263zdcbf">https://tinyurl.com/263zdcbf</a> (2015)	

Providing Unemployment Insurance Reforms” was signed into law and codified the Joint Task Force, making it a permanent fixture under the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development as the Council on the Underground Economy (CUE). *See* COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS COUNCIL ON THE UNDERGROUND ECONOMY, Annual Report at 4 (2015); *see also* G.L. c. 23, § 25 (describing statutory mandate and authority of the CUE).

133. The Joint Task Force’s, and later the CUE’s, Annual Reports provide further detail regarding the significant harms to the public interest that flow from misclassification. On top of the fact that misclassification tends to exploit the most vulnerable workers and deprive them of legal benefits and protections (*see* Annual Report (2013) at 19), these harms include:

- a) Millions of dollars in lost payroll tax revenue, *see* Annual Report at 39 (2009); *see also* Annual Report at 18 (2010) (same); Annual Report at 15 (2011) (same); Annual Report at 20 (2012) (same); Annual Report at 11 (2016) (same); Annual Report at 14 (2017) (same);
- b) Additional significant costs incurred by the Commonwealth, including providing health care coverage for uninsured workers, providing workers’ compensation benefits, and unemployment assistance without employer contribution into the Division of Unemployment Assistance fund, among other indirect costs, *see* Annual Report at 42 (2009); and
- c) The fact that businesses that properly classify employees and follow all relevant statutes regarding employment are likely to be at a distinct competitive disadvantage, and, by paying the proper taxes and insurance premiums, in effect end up subsidizing those businesses that do not, *see* Annual Report at 42 (2009); *see also* Annual Report at 1-2 (2013) (same); Annual Report at 11 (2011) (same); Annual Report at 2 (2015) (same).

134. Workers who are wrongfully misclassified experience lower earnings. *See* COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS JOINT ENFORCEMENT TASK FORCE ON THE UNDERGROUND ECONOMY AND EMPLOYEE MISCLASSIFICATION, Annual Report at 3 (2014) (workers who are misclassified “are often paid sub-minimum wage, receive no overtime, and may face barriers to receiving workers’ compensation and health care coverage, or be entirely ineligible for unemployment insurance (UI) or social security benefits”); *see also* Annual Report at 3 (2015)

(same). Misclassification further depresses earnings for workers who must bear business costs, mileage, necessary equipment and supplies, and the employer's share of payroll taxes.

135. In addition to the harm imposed on workers, businesses that misclassify employees under Section 148B cause significant public harm by unfairly lowering their costs of business and avoiding expenses that their law-abiding competitors must absorb. *See, e.g., Somers*, 454 Mass. at 592; *Depianti*, 465 Mass. at 620. These include the costs of tracking working time and wages (G.L. c. 151, § 15), making timely payment of wages and issuing paystubs (G.L. c. 149, § 148), and paying for important safety-net benefits such as workers' compensation and unemployment insurance. *Somers*, 454 Mass. at 592; *See* COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS JOINT ENFORCEMENT TASK FORCE ON THE UNDERGROUND ECONOMY AND EMPLOYEE MISCLASSIFICATION, Annual Report at 3 (2014). By illegally avoiding these costs, companies that misclassify workers gain an unfair competitive advantage over employers that obey the law. *Somers*, 454 Mass. at 592; *see also See* COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS JOINT ENFORCEMENT TASK FORCE ON THE UNDERGROUND ECONOMY AND EMPLOYEE MISCLASSIFICATION, Annual Report at 3 (2014).

136. These companies not only drive down their own expenses but also increase the cost of compliant employers. *See* COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS JOINT ENFORCEMENT TASK FORCE ON THE UNDERGROUND ECONOMY AND EMPLOYEE MISCLASSIFICATION, Annual Report at 3 (2014). Employers who misclassify their employees thus unfairly achieve a superior competitive position, forcing compliant peers to leave the market or conform to a developing norm of non-compliance, in either case worsening working conditions for workers throughout the sector. *See* COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS JOINT ENFORCEMENT TASK FORCE ON THE UNDERGROUND ECONOMY AND EMPLOYEE MISCLASSIFICATION, Annual Report at 3 (2014).

137. For these reasons, the SJC has made clear that Section 148B(a) is “a strict liability statute.” *Somers*, 454 Mass. at 591 (“Good faith or bad, if an employer misclassifies an employee as an independent contractor, the employer must suffer the consequences.”).

**C. An Injunction Is Warranted to Ensure that Drivers Will Receive the Benefits They Are Entitled to as Employees.**

138. Evidence specific to drivers in this case confirms that the public interest will benefit from an injunction that prevents Uber from continuing to misclassify drivers. Here, Uber has been misclassifying drivers as independent contractors since at least July 2017, in fact, this is at the core of Uber’s business model. AG FF 4-5. Absent an injunction, the many Massachusetts workers who drive for Uber right now as well as those who will do so in the future would be denied the benefits and rights of employment. AG FF 10.

139. The number of hours individual drivers who have driven for Uber without proper pay is substantial. AG FF 10. Uber’s expert determined that over 67,000 drivers completed rides for Uber over just a year’s time span. AG FF 10. *See also* Official Report of the State Auditor, Diana Dizoglio, Assessing Transportation Network Companies’ Financial Obligations to Massachusetts Programs (“Auditor’s Report”), April 30, 2024, at 3 (76,187 drivers had TNC vehicle inspections in a one-year period between September 2022 and August 2023).<sup>29</sup> Of those drivers, data from Uber’s expert indicates that over half of all Uber drivers spent 200 or more hours either waiting to receive a ride request, driving to pick up a rider, or transporting a rider to their destination. AG FF 10. Approximately 75% of drivers worked the equivalent of a part-time shift on each day that they logged onto the app, and 11% work the equivalent of a full-time shift or more. AG FF 13.

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<sup>29</sup> The Auditor’s Report is available at: <https://tinyurl.com/4s4tscj3>.

140. Uber has not reimbursed drivers for business expenses they incur as a result of providing rides on the Uber App. AG FF 6. Uber has not paid drivers for their time spent waiting to receive a ride or driving between rides. AG FF 7, 10-13. Uber also does not pay drivers overtime pay for hours worked in excess of forty hours in a week. AG FF 8. It does not guarantee drivers a minimum wage and it does not provide them with one hour of earned sick time for every thirty hours worked. AG FF 9. And the Commonwealth's revenues and benefit programs have suffered considerably due to Uber's failure to meet its state-law required financial contributions. *See, e.g.,* Auditor's Report at 3.

141. This evidence of harm strongly supports a finding that a permanent injunction is warranted in this matter.

Respectfully submitted,

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**CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE**

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