

Evans: Solons put profits over safety on Uber

Says fingerprinting of drivers should've been mandated in bill

[Marie Szaniszlo](#) Tuesday, August 02, 2016

Boston police Commissioner William B. Evans yesterday accused the Legislature of putting the profits of Uber, Lyft and other ride-hailing companies ahead of public safety by not mandating fingerprinting for their drivers in the bill it approved Sunday night, while a taxi advocacy group vowed to keep pushing for that requirement.

"I don't think you can put a price on making sure people driving the vehicles are as safe as possible," Evans said. "Obviously, (lawmakers) got a lot of pressure from lobbying people up there, and I'm really disappointed that they didn't see public safety as more important than the profit end of this."

Since Boston police began fingerprinting all hackney drivers, they've found some sex offenders and a man who'd been charged with attempted murder and banned them, Evans said. He said police should be able to do the same with those who work for ride-hailing companies.

"Let's understand: We fingerprint people every day, and some of them have CORI (Criminal Offender Record Information) information, and they continue to drive," Evans said. "We're looking for offenders who have sexual histories or violent histories. That's all we want to weed out here."

Another problem he sees is drivers with out-of-state plates picking up ride-hailers, he said.

"We're not even protecting the local Uber driver when we have Maine and New Hampshire vehicles down here picking up," Evans said. "So not only are we stealing from the hackney drivers, but from local people, as well."

The commissioner said he would not, however, ask Gov. Charlie Baker to veto the bill.

"I don't get involved in politics," Evans said, "and that's what this is." Scott Solombrino, a spokesman for Ride Safe Massachusetts, a taxi and limousine coalition that had pushed for fingerprinting in the bill, said the group plans to fight for a new measure that would require fingerprinting across the board — for ride-hailing company drivers, as well as for all taxis and chauffeured cars drivers.

The coalition also plans to meet with Attorney General Maura Healey, he said, to insist that Uber and Lyft drivers have been misclassified as contractors, rather than employees entitled to overtime, health care benefits and workman's compensation.

In a statement yesterday, Uber said: "We thank the Legislature for their efforts towards passing a ride-sharing regulatory framework. Massachusetts joins 34 other states that have established rules for this important industry. After a lengthy legislative session, we look forward to addressing remaining policy concerns in the regulatory process."