

CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH
4TH DISTRICT, NEW JERSEY

CONSTITUENT SERVICE CENTERS:

MONMOUTH
112 Village Center Drive
Freehold, NJ 07728-2510
(732) 780-3035

MERCER
4573 South Broad Street
Hamilton, NJ 08620-2215
(609) 585-7878

OCEAN
405 Route 539
Plumsted, NJ 08514-2303
(609) 585-7878
By Appointment



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

CO-CHAIRMAN, TOM LANTOS HUMAN RIGHTS
COMMISSION

SENIOR MEMBER, FOREIGN AFFAIRS
COMMITTEE

RANKING MEMBER, AFRICA, GLOBAL
HEALTH, GLOBAL HUMAN RIGHTS, AND
INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS
SUBCOMMITTEE

WESTERN HEMISPHERE SUBCOMMITTEE

RANKING MEMBER, CONGRESSIONAL-
EXECUTIVE COMMISSION ON CHINA

www.chrissmith.house.gov

Rep. Chris Smith (R-NJ)
House of Representatives, July 29th, 2020
H.R. 4686—Sami’s Law
Excerpts of remarks

In late March of 2019, University of South Carolina senior Samantha—Sami—Josephson left a late-night outing with her friends alone because she had to work in the morning.

The extraordinarily talented student who had recently earned a full scholarship to Drexel University Law ordered an Uber.

In a congested part of Columbia known as Five Points, a predator pretending to be her Uber driver, took her in his car and brutally murdered her.

Less than 24 hours later Sami was found in a field. The alleged murderer—Nathaniel Rowland—was caught, jailed and awaits trial. Last month, [a judge rightly denied bond](#) .

Almost immediately after her death and notwithstanding their excruciating agony over the loss of their precious daughter, Sami’s parents—Seymour and Marci—began pushing for comprehensive new protection policies at Uber and Lyft and legislation to ensure to the maximum extent possible that no one else ever loses her or his life or gets assaulted by a rideshare driver or a predator who pretends to be one.

They created the [#WHATSMYNAME Foundation](#) in “honor of their daughter to educate the world on ride share safety...Samantha may be gone” they write, “but our goal for the rest of our time on earth is to share her story and make a lasting change.”

Seymour and Marci have—and are—making “a lasting change”.

For over a year—especially given the pain due to the unimaginable loss of their daughter—Seymour and Marci have been heroic, tenacious and extraordinarily persuasive. They have been a

critically important part of the often-intense negotiations with multiple stakeholders including Uber and Lyft on both the substance and text of Sami's Law.

Marci and Seymour made frequent trips to the Capitol to meet lawmakers and staff from both sides of the aisle including Speaker Pelosi and Leader McCarthy, as well as Transportation and Infrastructure Chairman DeFazio and Ranking Member Graves, and Highway and Transit Subcommittee Chairwoman Norton and Ranking Member Davis.

I am especially grateful to the Speaker for her strong personal commitment to this cause and for bringing Sami's Law to the floor today and who—like leader Kevin McCarthy and others—welcomed Marci and Seymour with deep respect, kindness and total empathy for their loss.

Special thanks to my good friend and colleague Tom Souzzi for his tremendous support and for being the lead Democrat cosponsor.

Last year declaring that “We don't believe corporate secrecy will make anyone safer” [Uber released its first safety report](#). Uber found that over a two-year period—2017-2018--the company received 5,981 allegations of serious sexual assault in the U.S. and 19 people were killed in physical assaults during or soon after an Uber ride. They also found that “data shows that drivers report assaults at roughly the same rate as riders”

Sami's Law is designed to protect both—passengers and drivers.

Uber supports Sami's Law.

Danielle Burr, Head of Uber Federal Affairs said: “The tragic death of Samantha Josephson left the rideshare community heartbroken and devastated. Passage of ‘Sami's Law’ is another step in the ongoing work to help improve safety on rideshare by leveraging education and technology. We're grateful for...the support and collaboration of the Josephson Family... At Uber, our work on safety is never done and we remain committed to continue doing our part to help keep riders and drivers safe while using the platform.”

[CNN reported last December](#) that Lyft has been hit with more driver rape, sexual assault allegations: “Twenty more people are suing Lyft over alleged sexual assault, sexual misconduct or rape by drivers while using its service...The lawsuit comes on the heels of a [similar lawsuit filed](#) ...on behalf of 14 anonymous women, in addition to numerous other individual suits that [have been filed in recent months](#).”

Mr. Speaker, Sami's law requires each transportation network company (TNC) like Uber and Lyft to establish and implement a system that makes available to each passenger a digital method to verify that the driver with whom the passenger has been matched has been authorized by the TNC prior to beginning the trip.

The bill stipulates in pertinent part that “Such a system shall include—an initial notification sent to the passenger’s mobile, or otherwise communicated to the passenger, containing verifiable information specific to the TNC driver or TNC vehicle with which the passenger has been matched.”

All TNC companies that wish to continue to operate in the U.S. must establish such a system within 90 days of enactment.

The National Federation of the Blind helped craft the provision in the bill to ensure that there is a way for a passenger to use a non-visual arrangement to verify the authenticity of the TNC driver.

Sami’s Law not only sets minimum safety requirements for today’s technology and a process for successor technology performance standards;

It also:

- establishes a 15-member advisory council that reports to the Secretary of Transportation—SAMI’s Council—comprised of federal agency and public stakeholders to advance safety standards in the rideshare industry;
- makes it unlawful to sell, or offer for sale, ride-share signage making it more difficult for imposters like Sami’s murderer to pose as a driver;
- requires a GAO report on the incidence of assault and abuse of both passengers and drivers;
- requires that the GAO also examine the nature and specifics of “background” checks conducted by companies and the varying standards set by States regarding background checks.

Mr. Speaker, let me offer my profound gratitude to the professional staff including Robert Edmonson, Chief of Staff, Speaker Pelosi, Emily Domenech and Will Dunham, Republican Leader McCarthy’s office, Helena Zyblikewycz, Staff Director, T&I Subcommittee on Transit and Highways, Michael Falencki, Staff Director, T&I Minority Staff Director Subcommittee on Transit and Highways Brady Young, Office of Legislative Counsel, Kelsey Griswold and my chief of staff Mary Noonan.