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Massachusetts has become the first state to certify a union for rideshare drivers, opening the door to collective bargaining for nearly 70,000 workers and the creation of a new labour model.

Key takeaways

- The certification gives rideshare drivers a formal bargaining route without reclassifying them as employees.
- Uber and Lyft now face a collective negotiations risk with potential spillover in the larger gig economy.
- The move may prompt other US states to follow Massachusetts' lead.



Uber and Lyft drivers have formally unionised in Massachusetts, the newly formed App Drivers Union announced on 25 May 2026. The group is the first officially recognised union representing rideshare drivers – who maintain their independent contractor status – in the US.

The certification follows a 2024 ballot measure that gave Massachusetts rideshare drivers the right to organise and bargain collectively, while stopping short of treating them as employees. The law also allows drivers to bring unfair labour

practice complaints if their rights are interfered with.

App Drivers Union says it will represent around 70,000 drivers in the state, making this “one of the biggest organizing union victories in the last century.” It can now begin contract negotiations with Uber and Lyft, which will likely focus on pay and driver safety, among other things.

How did Massachusetts get here?

To obtain recognition, App Drivers Union first had to petition the Massachusetts Department of Labor Relations demonstrating support from at least 5% of drivers. It could then secure certification either through a majority vote of active drivers or by showing that at least 25% had designated the union as their bargaining representative.

On 15 May 2026, the agency confirmed that App Drivers Union had met the latter route by obtaining 32% support, clearing the statutory threshold; following a mandatory seven-day waiting period, the union was eligible for formal certification.

In a statement to Lexology PRO, Uber said it will work closely with the Massachusetts Department of Labor Relations and the “broader driver community” to “ensure that driver flexibility and hard-won benefits remain the foundation of our progress, while upholding the highest standards of safety, data security, transparency, and public accountability.”

Lyft shared a similar sentiment with Lexology PRO:

"As this new process moves forward, we're committed to engaging in good faith. Lyft does well when drivers do well, and we'll stay focused on helping drivers succeed while keeping rideshare affordable and dependable for everyone who counts on it."

Gig economy implications

The impacts of the union recognition span beyond Massachusetts and rideshare companies. App Drivers Union will serve as a test case for whether collective bargaining can occur within a platform model without reclassifying workers or rewriting the underlying business structure.

Massachusetts is also working to advance a separate package of rideshare regulations, including proposals for more rigorous background checks and stronger rider verification measures. Taken together, the union certification and the regulatory push suggest heightened oversight of rideshare apps. This is likely to impact compliance controls, customer safety messaging and public policy engagement for all qig economy companies.

Unionisation efforts for rideshare workers are also underway in other US states. For example, California rideshare drivers formally gained the right to unionise in January, though a union has yet to be formally certified. Drivers in Illinois rallied last week in support of a bill that would give them collective bargaining rights.

What's ahead for in-house teams

Legal and compliance teams at gig economy companies may want to map where labour law experimentation could spread next, especially in states where worker campaigns are active.

Rideshare companies should also review how driver-facing policies are documented, how pay changes are communicated and how grievance processes are handled, as these areas are likely to come under scrutiny if collective bargaining advances.

Even if the Massachusetts model remains geographically limited, it may influence how policymakers think about platform governance, worker protections and the boundaries of contractor independence across the gig economy.

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