

1 Randall Thomas Shrout, SBN 213838
2 Roy I. Egbokhan, SBN 350076
3 **The Shrout Law Group**
4 5050 Laguana Bl. Ste 112-444
5 Elk Grove CA 95758
6 (916) 937-8322
7 randall@shrout-law.com
8 DocService: serve@shrout-law.com

ELECTRONICALLY FILED
Superior Court of California
County of Sacramento
06/09/2025
By: C. Torres Deputy

6 **SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA**
7 **COUNTY OF SACRAMENTO**
8 **CIVIL DIVISION**

10 **CATHERINE SMITH, an individual,**
11 **Plaintiff,**
12 **vs.**
13 **LYFT, INC., a Delaware Corporation,**
14 **and DOES 1 through 50, inclusive,**
15 **Defendants**

Case No.: **25CV013563**
**COMPLAINT FOR DAMAGES AND
DECLARTORY RELIEF**
DEMAND FOR JURY TRIAL

17 **I. PARTIES**

- 18
- 19 1. Plaintiff CATHERINE J. SMITH ("Plaintiff" or "Ms. Smith") is an individual residing in
20 Roseville, California, and at all times relevant hereto was a resident of the County of
21 Placer, State of California.
 - 22 2. Defendant LYFT, INC. ("Lyft" or "Defendant") is a Delaware corporation doing business
23 in the State of California, with its principal place of business located at 185 Berry Street,
24 Suite 5000, San Francisco, California 94107. Lyft operates a transportation network
25 company providing rideshare services throughout California and the United States.
 - 26 3. Plaintiff is informed and believes and thereon alleges that defendants DOES 1 through 50,
27 inclusive, are persons or entities whose true names and capacities are unknown to Plaintiff
28 at this time, but who are in some manner responsible for the acts and omissions alleged
herein. Plaintiff will seek leave to amend this Complaint to state their true names and
capacities when ascertained.

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II. JURISDICTION AND VENUE

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4. This Court has jurisdiction over this action pursuant to California Code of Civil Procedure Section 410.10 and California Constitution Article VI, Section 10.
 5. Venue is proper in Sacramento County pursuant to California Code of Civil Procedure Section 395(a) because the incident giving rise to this action commenced when Plaintiff was picked up at Sacramento International Airport, which is located within Sacramento County, and because Defendant conducts substantial business activities within this county.

III. GENERAL ALLEGATIONS

6. On October 11, 2024, at approximately 1:00 AM, Ms. Smith, a 60-year-old grandmother and licensed real estate professional, was returning home from Sacramento International Airport following a delayed flight from her annual vacation to Mexico.
7. Due to the late hour, Ms. Smith elected to use Lyft's rideshare service rather than inconvenience family members, demonstrating reasonable reliance on Defendant's representations that it provides safe, reliable transportation services.
8. Ms. Smith requested a ride through the Lyft mobile application to her residence at 1641 Killdeer Way, Roseville, California 95747.
9. The Lyft driver assigned to Ms. Smith's ride was identified only as "Brian" and operated a white Tesla electric vehicle that was in violation of Lyft's own driver and vehicle standards.
10. Upon entering the vehicle, Ms. Smith immediately observed unsanitary and unprofessional conditions, including poor hygiene, excessive body odor, disheveled appearance, and a vehicle cabin filled with debris.
11. During the ride, the driver repeatedly stated "I need to charge" without clear explanation, ultimately abandoning Ms. Smith around 1:30 AM on a dark, rural road near Baseline and Palladay in Elverta, Placer County.
12. The abandonment location was devoid of lighting, sidewalks, or nearby residences or businesses, and Ms. Smith was left alone with her luggage in total darkness.
13. Ms. Smith activated Lyft's emergency feature, prompting a response by Placer County Sheriff's deputies (Incident Report #P241002956), who documented the dangerous nature of her abandonment.

- 1 14. Another Lyft driver later rescued Ms. Smith.
- 2 15. The incident occurred the same night as a shooting 1.5 miles away, and was later reported
- 3 by KCRA News on October 16, 2024.
- 4 16. Lyft’s initial response was dismissive, offering a refund and a promise not to pair her with
- 5 the same driver. Only after media coverage did Lyft deactivate the driver and offer \$200.
- 6 17. As a result of the incident, Ms. Smith has suffered severe emotional distress, PTSD
- 7 symptoms, sleep disruption, loss of independence, fear for safety, and economic damages.
- 8 18. Ms. Smith's counsel submitted a Notice of Dispute to Lyft on April 2, 2025, outlining the
- 9 facts and legal claims, and citing prior written communications dating back to December
- 10 2024 and February 2025. Lyft's third-party administrator, Brentwood Services, responded
- 11 with a \$200 settlement offer.
- 12 19. On May 2, 2025, Plaintiff’s new counsel, Randall Shroul, sent formal written notice of
- 13 substitution of counsel and reiterated Ms. Smith’s rejection of the \$200 offer. The
- 14 correspondence emphasized Lyft’s exposure to significant liability and punitive damages
- 15 based on the egregious nature of the incident and Lyft’s dismissive response.
- 16 20. These letters and responses demonstrate that Plaintiff satisfied the pre-arbitration dispute
- 17 resolution requirements set forth in Lyft's Terms of Service and provided Defendant with
- 18 ample opportunity to resolve the dispute without litigation.

19 **IV. CAUSES OF ACTION**

20 **FIRST CAUSE OF ACTION**
21 **(Breach of Common Carrier Duty)**

- 22 21. Plaintiff realleges paragraphs 1 through 20.
- 23 22. Lyft is a common carrier under California law and owed Ms. Smith the highest duty of
- 24 care (Civ. Code § 2100).
- 25 23. Lyft breached this duty by allowing a driver to accept rides despite insufficient battery
- 26 charge and poor vehicle condition, and by permitting the abandonment.
- 27 24. As a result, Plaintiff suffered damages as alleged.

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1 38. Plaintiff seeks declaratory relief to preserve her right to pursue claims in court.

2 **PRAYER FOR RELIEF**

3 WHEREFORE, Plaintiff prays for judgment against Defendant as follows:

- 4 1. General damages according to proof, not less than \$1,000,000;
- 5 2. Special damages, including security expenditures and economic losses;
- 6 3. Punitive damages for Defendant's conscious disregard of Plaintiff's safety and rights;
- 7 4. Injunctive relief requiring Lyft to improve safety monitoring and rider protections;
- 8 5. Declaratory relief invalidating the arbitration clause;
- 9 6. Costs of suit;
- 10 7. Pre- and post-judgment interest;
- 11 8. Such other relief as the Court deems just and proper.

12 Plaintiff demands a trial by jury on all issues so triable

13 Dated: June 7, 2025

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 15 By: *Randall ShROUT*
 16 Randall ShROUT, Esq.
 17 Roy Egbokhan, Esq.
 18 Attorneys for Plaintiff
 CATHERINE J. SMITH