

Kyle Birmingham's Story
September 25th, 2018
House Business and Labor Committee

Kyle Birmingham is a 29-year-old Clackamas resident. He speaks five languages fluently and makes his living as a language translator/interpreter. His specialty is medical and hospital setting translation services. Often, he is called in on an emergency basis by area hospitals when they encounter an injured individual who is unable to communicate in English.

Mr. Birmingham is visually impaired. He isn't fully blind but his visual impairment prevents him from operating motor vehicles or obtaining a driver's license. Kyle uses Transportation Network Companies (usually UBER) to get to and from his work locations, which can be all over the Portland metro area. These individualized rides are the only way he can commute to his translation jobs when they are on an urgent basis.

On September 07, 2017, Mr. Birmingham was on his way to a medical translation job at Good Samaritan Hospital. He was riding as a passenger in an UBER vehicle. The UBER was involved in a significant impact motor vehicle collision. Kyle sustained severe injuries. In addition to neck and back damage, Kyle sustained a traumatic dislocation of the fibular head within his left knee.

Since he was a paying passenger of an UBER at the moment of the collision no PIP benefits were available to help him obtain the medical care he needed to overcome his physical injuries. He could barely walk. He was completely disabled by his injuries. He could not work.

Since he only gets paid, job by job, when he performs translation services, Mr. Birmingham was financially devastated by the aftermath of the accident. He lost his home and had to move in with relatives. He could not get the surgeries he needed to repair the damage to his left knee until he basically lost everything and qualified for the Oregon Health Plan.

Had PIP coverage been mandated for the UBER he was riding in at the moment of the collision he would have had \$15,000 medical coverage 'up front' to allow him to get the medical care he needed. He would have received 70% of his normal average weekly earnings under the wage reimbursement provisions of PIP. This continuation of his income would have kept him from losing his home and allowed him to have money to pay for UBER rides to and from his many medical appointments.

Mr. Birmingham has indicated he would like the opportunity to come before the Legislature and tell his story. He believes the law must be changed to require UBER, LYFT and taxis to follow the same rules as everybody else on the road by requiring PIP coverage for these vehicles. He does not want anyone else to suffer the tragic consequences he experienced because there was no PIP for the UBER car he was riding in on the day of his collision.