



# Advocating for Worker and Consumer Protections

[The Aspen Institute's Policy Academy](#) turns professionals into policy advocates. We offer innovative training programs to equip leaders across sectors – from tech to climate, science to social impact – with the practical policy skills to craft solutions for society’s most pressing challenges. Based in the Bay Area, the Policy Academy is the first comprehensive nonpartisan and non-university training program in the United States offering a step-by-step process to learn practical strategies for policymaking. The Academy's predecessor, the Aspen Tech Policy Hub, has helped more than 500 alumni and staff gain government experience and seek policy impact.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Alex Rosenblat experienced several transformations after receiving Aspen Policy Academy training. About a year after completing the Aspen Tech Policy Hub fellowship, she took on her first policy role, joining Uber to improve the company’s relationship with its workforce of drivers and couriers. After learning how to assess these challenges through new lenses, she has continued to use her skills to advocate for policy change on important issues, including protecting consumer privacy rights in healthcare.

## BACKGROUND

In her work as a senior researcher at the Data & Society Research Institute, Alex had studied and written extensively about the impact that Uber’s pioneering algorithmic management structure was having on its drivers. She spoke with drivers who expressed frustration about the lack of support Uber provided when problems arose on the job. Each case that Alex studied brought up regulatory paradoxes that touched on antitrust and labor law, such as: If drivers are independent contractors, and their employer (in this case, Uber) coordinates the prices that hundreds of thousands of contractors work at, such as through surge pricing, is that a potential violation of antitrust law? Or are the employees misclassified as independent contractors, a potential labor law violation? The answers would lead to a variety of regulatory interventions.

To learn more about this project, please visit [aspempolicyacademy.org](https://aspempolicyacademy.org).

Alex joined the fellowship after having written a book on the impact of Uber's algorithmic management model that revealed these critical regulatory challenges. As neither a lawyer nor a policymaker, however, she did not know how to address them. “I encountered a lot of policy questions that I didn’t really know how to answer,” Alex said.

*“About a year later, I went to work in a policy role, which I probably wouldn’t have done without the fellowship experience.”*

Alex Rosenblat

## IMPACT

The fellowship program introduced Alex to different forms of translational work – how to apply her research findings toward applicable solutions – and provided her with the direct mentorship she needed to move from ideas to impact. She learned how to ask and answer pivotal policy questions, and how to identify and connect with important stakeholders. As part of her fellowship visit to Sacramento, Alex met with California State Representative Lorena Gonzalez Fletcher and her team to share her research. The Assembly continued to advocate for labor laws that safeguard gig workers.

“About a year later, I went to work in a policy role, which I probably wouldn’t have done without the fellowship experience,” Alex said.

That role was with the very company her research had been critiquing: Uber. Alex served as its Head of Marketplace Policy, Fairness and Research, working to improve the company’s relationship with and treatment of its drivers and couriers. She said that the Hub’s training on how to see a policy problem through a variety of stakeholder perspectives was vital in navigating her work there.

Alex has also used her policy skills to advocate for consumer rights in healthcare. Her latest project examines misleading or deceptive consent forms that patients are asked to sign before medical appointments, aiming to uncover consumer harms and advocate for clearer practices. And she has already made progress; Alex drew media attention to deceptive practices by one such vendor of patient registration services, Phreesia. The company subsequently altered the design and flow of its forms to better alert patients that authorizing Phreesia to use their personal health information for its advertising business is optional, not required. Alex plans to leverage her Hub training to identify and effectively engage with stakeholders and decisionmakers, continuing to turn her research into practical policy solutions.