

Uber's ousted CEO calls investor lawsuit unfounded

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Former Uber CEO Travis Kalanick is disputing claims in an investor lawsuit against him

Uber's ousted chief executive and company founder Travis Kalanick is asking for the dismissal of an investor lawsuit against him, calling it part of a personal attack aimed at sidelining him.

A response Thursday to a lawsuit filed last week by early Uber investor

Benchmark Capital said the litigation was part of a "shameful" effort to remove Kalanick from any role at the ridesharing giant.

The Benchmark lawsuit filed in a Delaware court accused Kalanick of fraud, breach of contract and of plotting to manipulate the board of directors to allow him to return as CEO following his resignation in June.

But in his response, Kalanick claimed that Benchmark "began secretly planning an effort to oust him" and "executed its plan at the most shameful of times" following the death of his mother in a May accident.

The filing said members of Benchmark earlier this year "handed Kalanick a draft resignation letter, and told him he had hours to sign it, or else Benchmark would start a public campaign against him."

Ultimately, he relented, "given his emotional state," according to the filing.

Kalanick argued that the lawsuit—which has brought to light strains and infighting at the world's most valuable venture-backed startup—should be dismissed and that the dispute should be settled in arbitration.

Kalanick said Benchmark seeks to "silence and sideline" him and effectively ban him from any major decisions at the San Francisco firm.

Benchmark has asked the court to bar Kalanick from tinkering with the Uber board in any way, arguing that the former CEO was trying to pack the board with loyalists to clear the way for his return.

Kalanick—who had been the driving force behind Uber's massive global expansion, but whose brash style had made him a liability—still holds a large voting stake in the company, which is valued at \$68 billion.

The pioneering company has been facing pressure to rein in a no-holds-barred management style led by Kalanick, 40, and to reform its work environment.

Kalanick's departure capped a rocky period for the global ridesharing giant, which has been roiled by disturbing reports of a cutthroat workplace culture, harassment, discrimination and questionable business tactics to thwart rivals.

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