

President Joseph R. Biden
1600 Pennsylvania Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20050

February 25, 2021

Dear President Biden,

We write to urge you to publicly voice support for the unionization effort of Amazon warehouse workers currently underway in Bessemer, Alabama. These brave individuals are providing an inspiring and important example of collective labor action, and deserve the backing of not just all Americans, but specifically their federal government.

In recent decades, corporate monopolies have leveraged their market power to abuse working people, suppress their wages, and obstruct their efforts to unionize. Amazon has perfected this approach – but a unionized workforce can begin to counteract some of those efforts, so Amazon workers can gain more of the benefits that their labor creates.

During the course of the coronavirus pandemic, Amazon's profits rose by nearly 200 percent and its stock price rose by 70 percent – and it has shared barely any of that largesse with its workers, even as they have put their own health at risk to help earn those profits. Nearly 20,000 Amazon workers have tested positive for COVID-19, according to the corporation's own numbers. According to the Brookings Institution, Amazon could have quadrupled its hazard pay to workers during the pandemic, and still made more in profits than it did last year.

But Amazon's labor abuses go beyond its actions during the pandemic. Thanks to its monopoly in warehousing and logistics, Amazon subjects its workers to unsafe conditions, constant surveillance, and an unfair "time off task" policy that prevents workers from taking adequate breaks. Amazon warehouse logs, where available, show an injury rate nearly double the warehouse industry average, and three times the average for private companies in general.

Instead of owning up to these issues and correcting them, Amazon has misled the public and lawmakers, and corrupted local officials into turning a blind eye to its transgressions.

Though policymakers have a significant role to play in altering Amazon's ability to leverage power over its workers, so too does a union – which is why Amazon has vigorously labored to prevent unionization from occurring, even going so far as to work with local authorities to change traffic light patterns outside the warehouse in Bessemer so that organizers wouldn't be able to speak to workers.

One of the most important things a president can do to help working people is to have their backs when they challenge corporate power, providing public support to the idea that Americans have a right to bargain collectively for better working conditions. During the 2020 campaign, you vowed to be "the most pro-union president you've ever seen." This is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to make that pledge a reality. We urge you to lend all your support to the Amazon workers in Bessemer. They deserve nothing less.

Sincerely,

American Economic Liberties Project
People's Action
198 methods
350.org
ACW: Adapting Canadian Work and Workers: Union-University Action Canada
AFGE Local 704
Association of Flight Attendants-CWA
Beyond Extreme Energy
Center for Popular Democracy
Demos
Earth Action, Inc.
Economic Policy Institute
Friends of the Earth
Futures Without Violence
Indian Point Safe Energy Coalition
Indivisible
Just Economics of WNC
Labor Network for Sustainably
Maine AFL-CIO
National Council for Occupational Safety
National Employment Law Project
National Partnership for Women & Families
NNUCHE District 1199NM
Oil Change U.S.
Our Revolution Birmingham
Our Revolution West Philly 'Burbs
PA Working Families Party
People's Parity Project
Principles NOT Parties
Progressive Democrats of America
Public Citizen
Revolving Door Project
Sunrise Movement
SWEET Alabama
Union of Concerned Scientists
UNITE HERE
Working Families Party