

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 27, 2020

Mr. Jeff Bezos
CEO
Amazon.com Inc.
410 Terry Ave. North
Seattle, WA 98109-5210

Dear Mr. Bezos:

We write to inquire about your company's efforts to protect its employees who, even during this unprecedented global health crisis, continue to fulfill online orders at Amazon's more than 100 warehouses across the country.

Reports show that Amazon's U.S. sales have spiked as many Americans turn to the online retail market for essential products as the federal government continues to encourage residents to stay home in order to curb the spread of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19).¹ In fact, Amazon recently notified vendors and third-party sellers that it would temporarily halt warehouse shipments of nonessential goods in order to alleviate the growing strain on its services.²

In a recent message to your employees, you recognized the critical work they are doing.³ You encouraged your employees to take care of themselves, yet you failed to recognize the vital role that Amazon plays in guaranteeing their safety. In fact, workers at Amazon warehouses worldwide continue to raise concerns that their employer is not doing enough to protect them from exposure to COVID-19. More than 1,500 of these workers have signed a petition asking Amazon for a more comprehensive response plan, increased protections, hazard pay, and changes to productivity-based performance metrics.⁴

Even prior to the dire global health crisis, these facilities have a proven record of high health and safety standard violations,⁵ and Amazon has failed to provide any substantive response or solutions to those violations. Given that the company has announced plans to hire 100,000 new

¹Abrar Peerzada, "Coronavirus: E-commerce gets a boost as customers prefer to stay indoor," Business Standard, (March 15, 2020), (available at https://www.business-standard.com/article/companies/coronavirus-e-commerce-gets-a-boost-as-customers-prefer-to-stay-indoor-120031500022_1.html)

²Leah Nylan, "Amazon expedites grocery, health shipments at expense of other products", Politico (March 17, 2020), (available at <https://www.politico.com/news/2020/03/17/amazon-expedites-shipments-coronavirus-134271>)

³Jeff Bezos, "A message to all Amazon employees", Instagram, (March 22, 2020) (available at: https://www.instagram.com/p/B-A5UI_nNrD/)

⁴Jay Greene and Elizabeth Dwoskin, "Amazon's warehouse workers sound alarms about coronavirus spread" Washington Post, (March 17, 2020) (available at <https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2020/03/17/amazons-warehouse-workers-sound-alarms-about-coronavirus-spread/>)

⁵National Council for Occupational Safety and Health, "The Dirty Dozen 2018: Employers Who Put Workers and Communities at Risk," (Apr. 2018), (available at <http://coshnetwork.org/sites/default/files/Dirty%20Dozen%202018%2C%204-25-18%2BFINAL%281%29.pdf>)

warehouse workers and institute mandatory overtime⁶, we are growing more concerned that Amazon does not possess an adequate internal pandemic preparedness and response plan. Recent statements made by Amazon do not include sufficient detail, and use vague terms such as “often” and “increasing,” instead of providing specific data. As such, we request the following information regarding the company’s policies and precautions:

- In light of the report of the confirmed COVID-19 case in your Queens, New York warehouse, have you developed a detailed response plan if other warehouses report confirmed cases? How do you plan to disseminate timely and accurate information to your workers regarding confirmed cases and its effects on their work schedules, employment status, and the employee benefits to which they are eligible?
- What kind of financial or educational support have you provided for your workers in Queens amid the temporary warehouse shutdown?
- How many times per day is Amazon cleaning and disinfecting warehouses, equipment and worker gathering spaces?
- How are workplaces and supply lines within the warehouses being reconfigured to promote social distancing? Are workers able to consistently keep a six-foot distance between themselves and others?
- While enforcing strict social distancing rules for workers, what new safety measures are in place to ensure workers do not injure themselves?
- Have you implemented any of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration’s suggested Engineering Controls⁷ in your warehouse, such as high-efficiency air filters, increasing ventilation rates, or negative pressure ventilation? If so, provide a list of the facilities which have been so updated and a list of facilities that have been scheduled for these upgrades along with the dates of expected completion.
- What resources were used to provide the up-to-date education and training on COVID-19 risk factors and protective behaviors given to workers?
- How much additional time are you allowing for scheduled breaks to ensure workers are given adequate opportunity to follow personal hygiene suggestions like handwashing? Do they have time and capacity to leave their station and get to a restroom to wash their hands, or can they face a penalty for doing so?
- What is the average rate or ratio being used to determine how much hand sanitizer and disinfecting wipes are made available to workers at each facility?
- In the absence of face masks, what alternative protective measures are you taking to ensure the safety of your workers? How have you distributed the limited face masks that you have received?

As the world responds to the unfolding COVID-19 crisis, Amazon has become a crucial player in the global supply chain; consumers everywhere are relying on your company to deliver the goods

⁶ David Clark, “Amazon ramps hiring, opening 100,000 new roles to support people relying on Amazon’s service in this stressful time”, Amazon Out for Delivery blog, (Mar. 16, 2020) (available at <https://blog.aboutamazon.com/operations/amazon-opening-100000-new-roles>)

⁷ Department of Labor, Occupational Safety and Health Administration “Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19” (March 2020), (available at <https://www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA3990.pdf>)

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they need during this difficult time. But as reliance on your business grows, so do the demands on your employees, as do the risks they face personally. We ask that you intensify your efforts to protect the health and safety of your warehouse workers. No employee, especially those who work for one of the wealthiest corporations in the world, should be forced to work in unsafe conditions.

We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Ilhan Omar
Member of Congress



Bernard Sanders
United States Senator

Also signed by the following Members of the House of Representatives:

Angie Craig
Jesús G. “Chuy” García
Raúl M. Grijalva
Ann Kirkpatrick
Barbara Lee
Jerrold Nadler
Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez
Ayanna Pressley
Jan Schakowsky
Mark Takano
Rashida Tlaib
Nydia M. Velázquez