



October 30, 2023

The Honorable Olivier De Schutter  
Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights  
United Nations  
405 E 45<sup>th</sup> St.  
New York, NY 10017

Dear Special Rapporteur De Schutter,

This letter is in response to your letter dated August 31, 2023, requesting information about benefits and working conditions at Amazon.

Amazon's [Global Human Rights Principles](#) demonstrate our support for fundamental human rights and the dignity of people connected to our business. At Amazon, individuals can get a job with no formal qualifications and grow personally and professionally through paid-for training, education, and mentoring – all while receiving great pay and benefits from day one. We are proud to offer a wide variety of roles for people of all backgrounds, giving individuals the ability to pick the opportunity that's best for them.

The information you requested is included below.

1. **Please highlight the steps that your company has taken, or is considering taking, to ensure that all workers earn a living wage, set at a level that ensures the worker and his or her family an adequate standard of living, as well as the progress that has been achieved (in line with the Guiding Principles on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights and the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights).**

This year, we invested \$1.3 billion in wage increases in the U.S. – increasing average hourly pay in 2023 for regular front-line employees from \$19 per hour to more than \$20.50 per hour, with starting pay ranges from \$17 to \$28 per hour based on position and location (a more than 50% increase over five years). We offer all of our regular, full-time employees great benefits. For example, in the United States, we offer comprehensive health care from day one, up to 20 weeks of paid leave, which includes 14 weeks of paid pregnancy-related disability leave plus 6 weeks of paid parental leave; 401(k) company matching, and free skills and career advancement training. Most part-time employees are also eligible for healthcare benefits, and more than 750,000 front-line employees, full- and part-time, have access to our innovative Career Choice program, which prepays tuition for continuing education courses and degrees, as well as high school diplomas, GEDs, and English as a Second Language (ESL) proficiency certifications.

In 2022, we committed \$1.2 billion to provide 300,000 employees in the United States with access to education and skills training programs—including college tuition for front-line employees—through 2025 as part of Amazon's Upskilling 2025 pledge.

Amazon offers a multitude of jobs and shifts, giving employees the ability to pick the opportunity that's best for them. We gather feedback from employees on the most effective ways to provide flexibility and support in managing their work and personal lives in order to create and develop new programs. In

addition to these options, we also provide opportunities for individuals seeking flexible opportunities through independent contracting.

- Please provide information regarding the measures that your company has, or is planning to put in place, to address allegations that, as a result of the low level of wages they receive, Amazon employees sometimes depend on government benefits such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.**

Amazon provides competitive pay and industry-leading<sup>1</sup>, affordable<sup>2</sup> benefits. For example, in the United States, Amazon pays at least \$17 an hour to regular front-line employees, with an average of \$20.50 an hour. An employee making \$17 an hour and working full-time would make \$2,944<sup>3</sup> per month (pre-tax), likely disqualifying them for SNAP or Medicaid. However, the vast majority of our employees at Amazon in the United States make \$17 or more an hour, meeting the [average living wage for their region](#).

Despite competitive pay and great benefits, employees at large companies may still be on public benefits depending on household factors and government policies. Household factors that can determine eligibility include: household size, special needs and disability, medical care of dependents (children and elderly), immigration status, asset ownership, and cost of living. Pandemic-era pauses to disenrollment also led many new employees to maintain qualification for public benefits, despite exceeding minimum thresholds for qualification.

Nearly one out of every two employees in an Amazon fulfillment center in the United States were unemployed before being hired,<sup>4</sup> indicating many are transitioning from unemployment, where they were more likely to qualify for public benefits, and may take time to transition into private insurance. In fact, most Amazon hourly employees are paid the same or more by Amazon than their previous employers and the presence of Amazon fulfillment and distribution centers increase annual pay by an average of 1.8% in a community.

- Please provide information regarding the measures that your company has adopted, or is planning to adopt, to address allegations that because it classifies many of its workers as independent contractors they are not eligible for employee benefits, which may result in them remaining below the poverty line.**

See response to Question #1.

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<sup>1</sup> For full-time employees: Walmart, coverage begins on the first day of the month in which your 89<sup>th</sup> day of employment occurs; Target, benefits are effective the first of the month following 30 days of employment; Costco; coverage begins the first day of the second month after 250 eligible paid hours.; The Home Depot, coverage generally begins on the date of hire, like Amazon.

<sup>2</sup> In 2022, the average annual premium for employer-sponsored health insurance borne by individuals was [\\$1,327](#). A full-time employee's annual premium contribution at Amazon for a standard plan in 2023 was nearly 18% lower, at [\\$1,092](#).

<sup>3</sup> Calculated by taking starting wage (\$17) x 40 hours/week x 4.33 weeks per month (52 weeks/12 months) on average

<sup>4</sup> H2 U.S Good Employer Campaign, based on Amazon New Hire Survey insights.

4. **Please provide your views regarding the allegations that Amazon's approach to mass-managing people through technology, while minimizing human contact with management, is resulting in inadvertent firings and stalled benefits, as well as negative effects on the well-being of workers.**

Amazon deploys technology in our fulfillment centers that uses advanced software and hardware to make our associates' lives and jobs easier, less stressful, safer, and more engaging. The highest priority for every Amazon Fulfillment Technologies team is the safety and wellbeing of our people.

No one is terminated, coached, or developed by a system. That is the role of managers – managers make final decisions on all personnel matters. The system being referred to simply tracks and ensures consistency of data and process across hundreds of employees to ensure fairness.

We would never dismiss an employee without first ensuring that they had received our fullest support, including dedicated coaching to help them improve and additional training. Since we're a company that continues to grow, it's our business objective to ensure long-term career development opportunities for our employees. Similar to many companies, we have performance expectations regardless of whether they are corporate or fulfillment center employees. We support people who do not perform to the levels expected of them with dedicated coaching to help them improve and be successful in their career at Amazon.

5. **Please provide information regarding the mechanisms, including grievance mechanisms, that your company has, or is planning to put in place, to address allegations your company has actively discouraged union organizing efforts and deploys anti-union tactics depriving workers of their right to organize. Please provide your views as to how your company guarantees union rights and the rights to organize and collective bargaining, as stipulated in the International Labour Organization's (ILO) Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87) and in ILO's Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98), which guide the interpretation of article 8 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and of article 22 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.**

As stated in our [Global Human Rights Principles](#), Amazon respects freedom of association and our employees' right to join, form, or not to join a labor union or other lawful organization of their own selection, without fear of reprisal, intimidation, or harassment. We have been transparent on these issues and published a report on [Amazon's Human Rights Commitment: Freedom of Association and Collective Bargaining in 2022](#).

It is our employees' choice whether or not to join a union. It always has been. Globally, Amazon applies or is party to dozens of collective bargaining agreements at national, regional, sectoral, and enterprise levels. We respect and apply the terms and provisions of these collective bargaining agreements, many of which have been renewed multiple times. Some of these collective bargaining agreements are negotiated with union representatives at the sectoral level and applied locally; others are negotiated and applied at the company level. In other situations, we honor and apply existing sectoral agreements but are not a direct party to those agreements.

We believe informed decisions, open communication, and freedom of expression are fully consistent with, and an integral part of, individuals' freedoms of association. Companies are permitted to communicate their views about unions or a specific union to their employees, just as unions may freely express their views on these same topics. We share information on unionization in different ways –

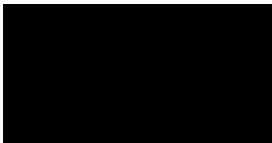
through small meetings on paid company time or by being available for questions and conversations as individuals want. We actively share facts and insights with employees so they can compare the differences and details they've heard elsewhere. These sessions are both lawful and protected under longstanding U.S. federal law and regulations, including National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) precedent.

Unions met the minimum showing of support required for the NLRB to schedule a representation vote at only four – a tiny fraction – of our U.S. locations. And in nearly every case, our employees voted in free and fair elections and decided to maintain a direct connection with us instead of joining a union. In the United States, the NLRB has very strict rules on how it manages a union election and on maintaining a proper environment so that employees' choices – whether yes or no – can be counted fairly, neutrally, completely and free from undue influence. In the election in our JFK8 building in Staten Island, as set forth in our legal objections, we believe that the inappropriate and undue influence of the NLRB's Regional Office in Brooklyn and the misconduct of the ALU improperly suppressed and influenced the vote in the 2022 election in Staten Island, New York.

Amazon's commitment to respecting human and labor rights includes enabling access to effective remedies. We value worker feedback, and are committed to providing our employees with grievance mechanisms and remedial action. Amazon employees have multilayered protections and remedies, both internal and external. We encourage active reporting of employee issues and concerns without fear of reprisal intimidation or harassment.

Thank you for your attention to these important matters.

Sincerely,



Brian Huseman  
Vice President, Public Policy