

Amazon workers call for united struggle to oppose the reopening of schools during the pandemic!

Amazon BWI2 Rank-and-File Safety Committee
5 February 2021

We, the Amazon workers of BWI2 in Baltimore, Maryland, register our support for keeping schools closed until the COVID-19 pandemic has been contained. We call for a struggle of all working people against the homicidal policy to reopen schools before the pandemic is stopped!

In refusing to return to unsafe classrooms, teachers in Chicago, Washington D.C. and elsewhere are defending our communities. If schools are allowed to reopen, COVID-19 will infect our children, enter our homes and infect us. It is up to all working people to stop this capitalist policy of mass infection. The Amazon workers of BWI2 call for workers to begin organizing plans for a political general strike to stop the efforts to reopen before it is safe.

The majority of scientific studies show that the closure of schools and non-essential businesses last spring saved tens of thousands of lives. Amazon warehouses have become hotbeds of COVID-19. While Amazon CEOs refer to us as “heroes,” they take away our hazard pay and benefits while thousands of our coworkers have become sickened and some have died.

We understand the difficulties imposed on students and parents because of poorly prepared remote classrooms. In many cases, these online accommodations were purposely made to fail. Democratic and Republican administrations are using their own disastrous response to the pandemic to force surrender to it now, as even deadlier coronavirus variants are spreading throughout communities.

Furthermore, the effort to reopen schools before the virus has been contained is based on deliberate lies. Jeff Bezos, the owner of Amazon and the *Washington Post*, has been one of the loudest voices demanding that

schools reopen.

Bezos’ *Washington Post* newspaper regularly demands that children return to schools. It cynically tries to play working people against one another by claiming teachers are making it impossible to get kids back to class. It lies by making claims that COVID-19 does not spread in schools. Its newspaper columns feature advocates of big business who care nothing about the lives of children.

The real reason to get schools open is so that parents can “get back to work.” This has been admitted in recent statements by members of Democratic President Joseph Biden’s own administration. It has nothing to do with the well-being of our children!

Teachers cannot do their jobs in an unsafe environment, just as we cannot do our jobs under unsafe conditions at Amazon. Schools have been underfunded by Democratic and Republican administrations for decades. Why should we trust what these people say about the safety of our schools?

In Baltimore, Washington D.C. and Northern Virginia, teachers are being forced to return to schools this month even as the vaccination of the population has broken down due to mismanagement and incompetence. Daily COVID-19 case counts in Maryland are currently double what they were in spring of last year, when schools were taken remote.

COVID-19 has exposed the interconnectedness of society. As working people, we must remember the traditional militant labor slogan: “An injury to one is an injury to all.” This saying has gained a deeper meaning during the pandemic.

That is why we are calling for the preparation for an all-out political general strike against the reopening.

Workers should form and join rank-and-file safety committees in their own workplaces to discuss strategies, demands and plans for organizing a united struggle of all workplaces and industries against these policies.

This struggle cannot be conducted under the auspices of the existing trade unions, including those currently seeking to gain rights to organize in Amazon warehouses. These organizations claiming to speak in the name of working people are opposed to a united working class struggle against the reopening policies of big business. They are opposed to any struggle of working people against big business.

Workers must take the initiative to form independent rank-and-file safety committees or else run the risk of being delivered, bound and gagged, to the representatives of Wall Street by their trade union accomplices.

In raising this call for a united general strike against the homicidal policies of school reopening, the BWI2 Rank-and-File Safety Committee issues this modified version of its demands:

- Paid time off with no threat of termination for workers unwilling to risk themselves during the pandemic. The rehiring at the same wage or higher for workers previously terminated for protesting and resisting Amazon's abuses.

- Accessible, reliable and *safe* testing and vaccination for all employees who desire them.

- Closure of facilities for necessary cleaning. If an outbreak is detected at a fulfillment center, it must be closed for at least two days and deep-cleaned with no loss of pay to the workers affected.

- An end to abusive speed-up. Extended break periods at the end of every hour to maintain health and safety. "Time Off Task" (TOT) tracking and other forms of harassment must be abolished.

- Immediate reinstatement of hazard pay with retroactive pay increases.

We encourage all workers agreeing with these demands to join our growing rank-and-file safety committee network and help us prepare this opposition to the unsafe policies of Wall Street and big business.



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