

Concessions workers in 3-day strike at Boston's Fenway Park

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Fenway Park and MGM Music Hall concessions workers walked off the job Friday, July 25, when negotiations between the Aramark company and UNITE HERE Local 26 stalled. This is the first-ever strike at the ballpark of the Boston Red Sox baseball team since it opened 113 years ago.

The strike has been launched during a high-profile Major League Baseball (MLB) weekend series between the Red Sox and the World Champion Los Angeles Dodgers, as well as a concert by country artist Riley Green at MGM Music Hall at Fenway on Friday night.

The workers have been on the job without a contract since it expired on December 31, 2024, but the union has limited the strike to only three days, Friday through Sunday. After almost seven months of negotiations, the union finally organized a strike authorization vote on June 15. More than 95 percent of Fenway and MGM Music Hall workers voted in favor of a strike. Workers are demanding better wages and conditions, as well as a fight against automation being used to eliminate jobs and slash workers' income.

Fenway Park is big business. Boston Red Sox home games have drawn about 33,000 fans per game in 2025, and revenue for 2024 was around \$574 million. With the average price for a ticket and concessions of around \$60 to \$100 per person, the Red Sox organization brings in \$2 million to \$3 million per game. Direct revenue for the Boston-LA series is expected to yield \$6–9 million for the three games.

Ticket prices for the Friday night event at MGM Music Hall range from over \$200 to almost \$1,000. With a capacity of around 5,000, the show is estimated to bring in anywhere from hundreds of thousands to a million dollars in ticket and concessions revenue.

The union has not indicated the specific demands it is making of Aramark. Local 26 says it is fighting for

standard, city-wide wages, but has avoided mention of a specific amount. Local President Carlos Aramayo told CBS News that workers are paid “poverty wages,” with some starting at minimum wage before slowly progressing to \$18 an hour. Aramayo said that people performing similar work at nearby Boston University or Simmons University are making \$10 an hour more than Fenway workers.

Beyond the issue of poverty pay, workers are battling against the relentless march of AI-driven automation being used by the company to boost profits by eliminating jobs and slashing worker income. The union is demanding non-specific “guardrails on automation” to protect jobs.

The consequences of self-checkout alcohol kiosks and other automated systems are stark. CBS News spoke to Charbel Salameh, a beer seller for 28 years, who described how a concessions stand that once employed four sellers now has only one person overseeing four machines, eliminating three jobs and those workers' gratuities. Amanda Savage said her tips are being cut in half due to automation. “At least a dozen jobs have been replaced by self-checkout alcohol kiosks” alone, she said.

The union has raised safety concerns, pointing out that automation cannot provide human assistance and warned of the risk of automation allowing the sales of alcohol to minors or to overserved patrons, which were previously monitored by workers.

Given the enormous sums of money involved in just this three-day event, workers were in a powerful position to force Aramark to negotiate under conditions of a complete shutdown of Fenway Park. Neither the company nor the union have said anything about the content of negotiations, but Aramark has boasted of “contingency plans” to ensure “fans will not encounter

service interruptions.”

Aramayo stated at a press conference, “Please enjoy the game. Go to the game, have a great experience at Fenway Park.” His only appeal to fans was, “Please do not purchase any food, any beer, any drink, any concessions while you’re in the park.” This allows the Red Sox organization, which claims to be merely “monitoring the situation,” to continue raking in profits undisturbed.

There has been no call by the union to shut down the capitalist spectacle that exploits the workers they purport to represent. Rather, it is a polite request to marginally inconvenience ballpark operations, while allowing the core business—the game itself—to proceed unhindered. A genuine strike would seek to paralyze the employer’s operations, forcing them to the bargaining table out of economic necessity. By allowing the games to continue, the union leadership is actively undermining the strike’s potential power.

Instead of mobilizing that power, the union’s approach is an appeal to the very capitalist owners they are supposedly fighting. The union sent a letter to Red Sox owner John Henry—estimated net worth more than \$5 billion—asking him to intervene in the negotiations. This is a desperate plea to the ruling class, rather than a mobilization of the workers’ collective strength.

UNITE HERE is a large national union, with approximately 300,000 members across the US, and Local 26 itself boasts almost 9,000 members in Boston and Providence, Rhode Island. However, the union has made no call for broader strike action or solidarity among its vast membership, or with other unions and sectors of the working class. The union has made no appeal for support from either fans or the MLB players themselves, without whom the Red Sox and other team owners would stand to make zero profits.

A truly effective struggle would necessitate a widespread mobilization, linking the fight of Fenway workers with the struggles of all workers facing low wages, precarious employment, and the onslaught of automation.

The Fenway workers’ fight for better wages, tips and protection against automation is part of the intensification of class struggle across the globe. Their courageous stand is being betrayed by a union leadership that seeks to confine their struggle within safe, manageable boundaries that prevent a real

confrontation and ultimately serve corporate interests.

The future of these workers’ struggle, and that of the entire working class, hinges on workers themselves taking control, building rank-and-file committees independent of the union bureaucracy, and forging genuine solidarity to launch an all-out offensive against corporate exploitation. A central demand of a rank-and-file committee should be an end to secret negotiations, with control of the contract talks taken out of the control of the UNITE HERE apparatus and placed in the hands of trusted rank-and-file workers. The committee should formulate its own demands, discussed and agreed to among the membership, ahead of any future talks.



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