DSA and union leaders push bill to recognize Amazon delivery drivers as employees

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24 November 2026

Last year, Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) member and Queens City Council Member Tiffany Cabán put forward the so-called Delivery Protection Act, which would prohibit companies like Amazon from outsourcing the final stretch of shipments to third-party Delivery Service Partners (DSPs) and instead require them to hire drivers directly.

Reintroduced in February as Intro 518, the bill has the support of a majority of the 51-member City Council, the Teamsters union and Mayor Zohran Mamdani, also a DSA member, who endorsed it on August 10.

Amazon has answered with a full-scale campaign to kill the bill. Since Thursday, November 19, the company has been showing New York City customers pop-up messages and a homepage banner warning that the "NYC Council could add up to $5 per order," and urging them to contact their council members. Amazon has not explained how it arrived at the figure.

Three days earlier, an attorney for a business coalition backed by Amazon sent Council Speaker Julie Menin a letter threatening to sue the city if the bill passes, claiming it conflicts with federal and state law. The company has also floated moving its delivery facilities outside city limits. This from a corporation that reported $28.1 billion in operating income for the third quarter of this year, the highest operating margin in its history.

The pressure is having its effect. According to the *New York Times*, Menin, who co-sponsored the bill, is open to amending it, including possibly scrapping the ban on subcontracting that is its central provision, and has considered a version that would only license and regulate delivery warehouses without requiring Amazon to employ its drivers. Mamdani has said the bill should pass as it stands. The trade publication FreightWaves predicts the Council will pass something before the end of the year, but that it "won't be the same as what was originally introduced."

Cabán first announced the bill at a City Hall rally in September 2025, weeks after 105 Amazon drivers lost their jobs. The drivers worked for Cornucopia Logistics, a DSP operating out of Amazon's DBK4 delivery station in Maspeth, Queens. They had voted to join Teamsters Local 804 in September 2024 and walked out in the Teamsters' strike that December. On August 20, 2025, Amazon abruptly ended its contract with Cornucopia. Drivers returning from their routes were pulled aside and told not to come back. Although they wore Amazon uniforms, drove Amazon vans and delivered Amazon packages, Amazon insisted they were never its employees.

Amazon denied that the termination was retaliation. But Cornucopia closed its New York City driver facility while it kept hiring foot and bicycle couriers to deliver Amazon packages from a Manhattan location. This exposes Amazon's excuse as a fraud. The same pattern was repeated this week: about 200 e-bike couriers employed by Kaizen Management Solutions, a Manhattan contractor, were laid off on November 18 after Amazon canceled its contract, citing safety violations and fraud in recording hours, charges that some workers dispute.

How the DSP system works

Amazon created the DSP program in 2018 to cut the cost of "last-mile" delivery, the most expensive stage of getting a package to a customer. Amazon says it contracts with more than 4,400 DSPs worldwide, accounting for more than 390,000 jobs. In New York City alone, Amazon says more than 40 DSPs employ over 5,000 workers.

The DSPs are subcontractors under Amazon's complete control. Drivers wear Amazon uniforms and drive vans branded with Amazon's logo. Amazon sets the routes, the package and stop counts and the metrics drivers must meet. It grades each DSP on a tiered scorecard that rises to "Fantastic Plus," and drivers are monitored by Netradyne cameras mounted in their vans. The DSP owner, meanwhile, carries the cost of vehicle maintenance, repairs and fuel, along with the responsibility for safety and workers' compensation when drivers are injured.

The DSPs are kept small and have high turnover. This keeps drivers divided into thousands of separate units, each of which Amazon can cut loose at any time. All the pressure Amazon puts on the DSP owners is passed down to the drivers.

DSP drivers endure a crushing volume of stops and packages, warehouses that run seven days a week, extreme heat and cold, the danger posed by loose dogs and hostile homeowners, and constant electronic tracking. The Government Accountability Office has found that last-mile facility workers have the highest estimated rate of serious injury of any private-sector industry.

Even in its original form, the Delivery Protection Act would do little about these conditions. It would create a city licensing system for last-mile facilities and require safety training, but it would

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leave the pace of work and the surveillance of drivers in Amazon's hands.

The bill's supporters present direct employment as a door to unionization and better conditions. But Amazon already employs its warehouse workers directly, and no union has ever secured a contract from Amazon at any facility in the United States.

Workers at the JFK8 fulfillment center on Staten Island voted to join the Amazon Labor Union (ALU) in April 2022. The union was hailed as a historic breakthrough by Senator Bernie Sanders and Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez. Amazon refused to recognize it.

On April 1 of this year, the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) ordered Amazon to bargain, but the company is free to contest the order in court. More than four and a half years after the vote, JFK8 workers still have no contract. In June, an NLRB judge also ordered Amazon to bargain with Teamsters at its DCK6 delivery station in San Francisco, with the same result so far.

The Teamsters' first group of unionized DSP drivers fared no better. In 2023, 84 drivers and dispatchers at Battle Tested Strategies, a DSP at Amazon's DAX8 station in Palmdale, California, joined Teamsters Local 396, and the company recognized the union. Amazon ended its contract in June 2023. An NLRB regional office later found that Amazon was a joint employer of the drivers and issued a complaint.

But in late May of this year, an NLRB judge approved a settlement between the agency's General Counsel under the Trump administration and Amazon. Each worker gets two weeks' pay, and the settlement includes a clause in which Amazon admits nothing and specifically disclaims joint-employer status. The Teamsters are appealing.

The first union contract at any Amazon facility in North America came only on November 13, in Canada. An arbitrator imposed the agreement on roughly 800 workers at the YVR2 warehouse in Delta, British Columbia, after the provincial labour board ordered binding arbitration. Amazon has asked the British Columbia Supreme Court to block it, and it has been backing a drive to decertify the union.

Even if the Delivery Protection Act passes intact, drivers would face the same company and the same union strategy, which has produced no contract anywhere in the US.

The Teamsters' record

The Teamsters have carried out only one national action against Amazon, the strike of December 19–24, 2024. The union claimed up to 10,000 workers at seven facilities. But a WSWS reporting team found JFK8 operating normally, even though by that time ALU had affiliated with the Teamsters, and Amazon said holiday deliveries were not disrupted. The strike was called off on Christmas Eve without any concessions from the company. At the time, Amazon employed more than 1.5 million people worldwide.

The Teamsters' response to the Cornucopia firings has been to file charges with the NLRB and lobby the City Council, not to mobilize Amazon workers to defend the jobs of the 105 drivers. The same bureaucracy is helping UPS carry out tens of thousands of job cuts.

While workers have every right to fight for recognition as Amazon employees and for a contract, the Teamsters bureaucracy is concerned primarily with establishing the same corrupt relations it has with other employers. The apparatus of officials make six-figure salaries and are tied to the corporate parties, with General President Sean O'Brien a prominent Trump supporter.

As for the DSA, which runs the city, it is directing workers' anger into appeals to the City Council rather than in an independent struggle. The fate of the Delivery Protection Act is now being decided in backroom negotiations between Menin, Amazon's lawyers and the Teamsters.

Amazon runs 24 hours a day, seven days a week, across a global network of warehouses, delivery stations and air hubs, and it plays warehouse workers, DSP drivers and Flex drivers off against each other. Only a unified movement of all these workers, joined with logistics workers at UPS, FedEx and the Postal Service, can fight for higher pay, the elimination of punishing quotas and delivery rates and adequate time off.

Postal workers are already beginning to organize along these lines. The USPS Workers Rank-and-File Committee, founded in September 2023, has been joined this year by new committees at the Springfield Network Distribution Center in Massachusetts, the St. Paul Processing and Distribution Center in Minnesota and in southern Pennsylvania.

These committees unite clerks, carriers and mail handlers against both management and the union bureaucracy, as the Postal Service faces the deepest cuts in its history. They are affiliated with the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC).

Amazon workers need the same kind of organization: rank-and-file committees, democratically controlled by workers themselves, that unite warehouse workers, DSP and Flex drivers, contractors and full-time employees and link up with Amazon workers internationally. The International *Amazon Workers Voice* is helping workers build these committees. Fill out the form below to join or to form a committee at your workplace.

To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact

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