

Testimony by Ed Dupree (Whole Foods and UFCW 1776)
Pennsylvania Senate Democratic Policy Committee Hearing
March 14, 2025

Members of the Pennsylvania Senate Democratic Policy Committee Hearing:

I want to thank you for this opportunity today to testify at this hearing about my story and the story of so many workers who recently won our union election at Amazon's Whole Foods in our Center City Philadelphia store.

My name is Ed Dupree. I am an 8-year employee of Whole Foods, work in produce at my store and am a member of our union organizing committee with my co-workers and UFCW Local 1776.

I also wanted to shout out that I live in West Philadelphia and am a constituent of Senator Vincent Hughes.

This hearing is about protecting our workers and I can't think of any better protection workers can have than forming a union. A union means a voice in the workplace. A union means a seat at the table. And my co-workers and I made a historic step when we were the first group of workers in the nation to successfully vote to unionize at an Amazon Whole Foods location on January 27, 2025.

I want to thank so many Senators here who came out to support us at our rally back on January 13th before we voted. Seeing the level of support we received from the community and elected officials was a huge boost for us heading into that union vote. Amazon – as you can imagine – pulled out the entire anti-union playbook on us. But we stuck together and were proud to vote union yes.

But I want to tell you what has been happening since that amazing win on January 27th.

That very same night on January 27th, President Trump removed the National Labor Relations Board General Counsel, and then unlawfully fired Board Member Gwynne Wilcox. This threw the NLRB into chaos, with the Board no longer having a quorum to function.

Five days later, Amazon filed multiple baseless objections to try and overturn our union win. One of those objections was that the NLRB wasn't able to certify our election win due to the lack of that quorum that exists. I will speak to those objections in a few moments.

Over the last few months, we have seen some of the following tactics from Whole Foods management:

- Policy changes at work to target union supporters
- More aggressive enforcement of store policies that were never taken seriously before, including the firing of pro-union workers
- New hires and rotating management shadowing union supporters
- Trying to limit our contact at work amongst workers who voted yes in January

We know exactly what Amazon is trying to do. We have been ready for this.

At the same time Whole Foods management was continuing their efforts to intimidate us, we took Amazon's blatantly false objections to a hearing before an NLRB Board Agent. As the company continued their delay tactics, we were able to tell the truth about our union organizing win and make clear our demands to get to the bargaining table to work out a fair labor contract.

I am happy to tell you on May 1st – May Day – the NLRB Board Agent issued their decision from that hearing and dismissed all of Amazon's objections to our union win. This is a great step in the right direction. But we know Amazon will appeal and bring more objections and lawsuits. We are in for a long fight.

Knowing that, that is why we are here today.

We encourage the State Legislature to continue to advance legislation that makes it easier for workers to form and join unions.

Senate Bills 587 and 621 would move toward eliminating state subsidies to companies that hire union busting firms. That feels like a great piece of legislation to protect workers and continue to make it easier to unionize for workers.

But, even more than policy changes, we ask for your continued support, voices, social media presence and everything you can do to make sure Amazon hears us loud and clear:

It is time to stop delaying.

It is time to stop denying your workers the rights they deserve.

And it's time to get to the bargaining table with your workers.

Thank you.