

Dear Chair Fahey, Vice-Chairs Breese-Iverson and Kropf, and members of the House Committee on Rules.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of HB 3568, the Warehouse Worker Protection Act.

My name is Spencer Trumm. I live in East Portland, where I work as a Community Organizer. But I also work as an associate in Amazon's UOR-2 Prime Fresh warehouse in Northwest Portland.

UOR-2 is a little different from a typical Amazon warehouse. It's a little like a giant supermarket, where workers stock shelves and fill order bags full for delivery with items that they'd find in a well-stocked big-box retail store.

That doesn't sound too bad, right? But the reality is that Amazon remains Amazon. Their definition of "customer obsession," by which all else must be subordinated to delivering packages within a two-hour window, puts workers and consumers at risk.

Let me tell you what this looks like at UOR-2.

At UOR-2, any time an associate spends performing any action that does not move product along a distribution chain is counted against that associate's performance metric. This is common knowledge among workers there, but the actual number used for the metric is much more nebulous.

But what does this mean beyond the general climate of fear and desperation among the workers as they strive to meet an invisible number?

Well, for example, I've seen rotten vegetables set to the side on shelves, but not thrown away. Why? Because someone wanted to get back to picking, for fear of the hidden quota. They figured out that following the standard procedure of counting, classifying, and disposing of rotten food would take that they couldn't afford to take.

I've been told, along with other associates, that we may not interrupt an outbound picking run to use the bathroom. I can't believe that I have to remind anyone that workers' personal dignity matters more than customers' speedy receipt of junk food. But it does.

Around New Year's Day of 2022, I saw a brand-new hiree get sent into the freezer to stock shelves. There was no supervisor on duty to brief her on freezer safety or make

sure she had the proper personal protective equipment, or PPE. I wasn't a supervisor, so I couldn't brief her, but I urged her to talk to management. She said she was afraid. And honestly, I can't blame her. Amazon's turnover rate and record of campaigns against worker organizing of any kinds speaks for itself.

On February 6th, 2022, a freezer supervisor demanded that I enter the freezer without a lone worker device. Doing this would have put my safety at risk, as these devices combine multiple functions that are essential for work in industrial freezers. Their fall detectors can alert management and emergency personnel if someone were to slip or trip on the frozen spills and loose packaging debris that we frequently encountered in the freezer. Their alarm buttons can make enough noise to cut through the din of the freezer's cooling system and summon other workers to help. Their GPS tracker can direct emergency personnel to a missing worker if they are unable to move to a safe location. And their timers help workers track exposure to the freezer's -10° F temperatures and remind them to take mandatory warming breaks.

Moreover, working in the freezer without a lone worker device would have violated multiple signs posted around the freezer area, which mandated that anyone entering the freezer must wear complete PPE at all times. But when I brought up the safety risk, she dismissed the need for the devices, saying "Oh, that's just if you fall."

As I worked, she ordered me to stay in the freezer to finish an outbound pick, even if doing so would keep me in there without a warming break for longer than the maximum allotted 30 minutes. She grew angry when I stepped out of the freezer to replace that device after its battery ran out of power, and impressed upon me the importance of delivering the orders, which were due at the customers' doors in 2 hours and 15 minutes. Picking all the items so that they could be delivered in that timeframe would have forced me to disregard established safety standards and ignore the pain and numbness in my fingers that grew worse by the minute. But she didn't care, and continued to press me to keep working.

This same freezer supervisor has continued to demand that I ignore safety standards so that we may complete frozen food orders faster. Most recently, she got upset with me when I paused my work on an outbound freezer pick to bring a large quantity of sausage that had no expiration date to management's attention. She pressured me to put it in people's order bags, even though we couldn't say for sure if it was still fresh, and we were generally told to throw away any perishable item missing an expiration date.

I could go on. Throughout my sixteen months working there, I've seen carts, ice boots, trash barrels, and supply cabinets laid out so that they block eyewash stations, fire extinguishers, and emergency exits. I've heard ranking employees privately admit that the lone worker devices' GPS systems were discovered to be faulty to the point of needing to be recalibrated, and I've heard some of those same employees try to spread the rumor that associates had gradually destroyed the devices over the months through carelessness, despite the fact that they practically vanished overnight at the same time of year in 2022 and 2023.

The point of all this isn't just to complain about my job. It's to tell you about how one of the wealthiest companies on the planet has cowed many of its workers into compromising dignity and safety on the job for the sake of quotas that it rarely publicizes.

But the problem isn't just Amazon. No worker anywhere should have to work without PPE. And no worker anywhere should have to meet quotas that endanger them or prevent them from doing parts of their job that protect the public. And no worker anywhere should feel pressure not to attend to their most basic bodily needs for the sake of moving a few more widgets out a door.

HB 3568 will play an important role in protecting Oregon's warehouse workers from unreasonable quotas and dangerous working conditions. I urge you to pass it without delay.

Sincerely,

Spencer Trumm

NOTE: This is a written version of the spoken testimony I delivered at the public hearing on April 18th. I am also submitting photos of some of the conditions it describes.