

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

November 4, 2022

Howard Schultz
Starbucks Corporation
2401 Utah Avenue South
Seattle, WA 98134

Dear Mr. Schultz,

As Members of Congress who are committed to protecting the full scope of reproductive health care services—including abortion care—as well as the right of all workers to unionize, we urge you to immediately issue clear guidance on Starbucks' offer of travel assistance for abortion care and affirm that this benefit will be available to all employees regardless of union status. Everyone deserves access to abortion, which is critical to controlling their own bodies, lives, and futures.

Recently, your company announced that it would reimburse employee travel expenses if an employee needed to obtain abortion care in another state.¹ However, Starbucks said it could not “make promises or guarantees about any benefits” for unionized employees at your stores. Starbucks has attempted to dodge requests to clarify this statement, causing enormous confusion. Access to abortion care services remains a concern at the forefront of Starbucks' employees minds. In August of 2022 at the Women's Convention in Houston, a leader of the Starbucks Workers United campaign said, “Starbucks is leveraging abortion benefits for union activity, so that's a huge reason why I'm here.”² We urge Starbucks to stop these appalling and retaliatory practices, and to make clear that Starbucks will provide travel assistance for unionized employees seeking abortion care.

Starbucks has attempted to blame the collective bargaining process for its behavior and lack of assurance to all Starbucks employees. As the Starbucks legal team is undoubtedly aware, there is nothing barring the company from offering coverage for the full spectrum of reproductive health care for unionized employees. Starbucks should follow the lead of many large corporations—including UPS, Safeway, Verizon, and Microsoft—that have signed union neutrality agreements to ensure the right of employees to freely decide to unionize.^{3,4}

We are closely monitoring Starbucks' broad strategy of union-busting, intimidation, and retaliation against employees, which watchdog and media groups continue to surface.⁵ Furthermore, we would like to reiterate the warning of our colleagues in the U.S. Senate that attempting to interfere with workers' right to organize is an illegal unfair labor practice under Section 8(a)(3) of the National Labor Relations Act (“NLRA”) by “discriminat[ing] in regard to hire or tenure of employment or any term or condition of employment to

¹ Starbucks, “Letter to Starbucks Partners: Ensuring Access to Healthcare.” June 15, 2022.

<https://stories.starbucks.com/press/2022/letter-to-starbucks-partners-ensuring-access-to-healthcare/>

² Gill, Julian. “Hundreds energized at 2022 Women's Convention in Houston held in aftermath of Roe v Wade decision.” *Houston Chronicle*. August 12, 2022. <<https://www.houstonchronicle.com/news/houston-texas/houston/article/Hundreds-energized-at-2022-Women-s-Convention-17371892.php>>.

³ Scheiber, Noam and Karen Weise. “Microsoft Pledges Neutrality in Union Campaigns at Activision.” *The New York Times*. June 13, 2022. <<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/06/13/business/economy/microsoft-activision-union.html>>.

⁴ Freeman, Richard et al. “The Legal, Economic and Business Case for Neutrality and Majority Verification of Worker Desire for Union Representation.” February 2016. <https://cows.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/1368/2020/12/2016_The-Legal-Economic-and-Business-Case-for-Neutrality-and-Majority-Verification-of-Worker-Desire-for-Union-Representation.pdf>.

⁵ Blest, Paul. “Starbucks Is Firing a Huge Number of Pro-Union Workers.” *VICE News*. August 4, 2022. <<https://www.vice.com/en/article/epzz9z/starbucks-union-busting-stores-protest>>.

encourage or discourage membership in any labor organization.”⁶ Therefore, we strongly urge you to change course and adopt a policy of union neutrality across the board. Further, we ask that you respond to the following questions:

1. As of November 3, 2022, what is Starbucks’ policy on its offer of travel assistance for abortion care to its employees?
2. Does that policy apply to both unionized and non-unionized employees?
3. Does that policy apply to employees with and without the company’s health insurance plan?
4. If the offer of assistance is not equal for all employees, will you commit to making Starbucks’ offer of travel assistance for abortion care available to all employees, regardless of union status or health plan status?

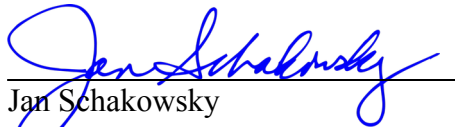
Every worker has the legal right to join a union and every worker should have access to the full range of employment benefits offered by their employers—including reproductive and gender-affirming health care—regardless of their decision to unionize. As you know, Starbucks has received significant financial support from the federal government, including through federal grants and contracts. In addition, the federal government continues to procure Starbucks products, sometimes through the government’s food service partners, and allows Starbucks to operate a limited number of locations on federal properties. Should Starbucks continue its discriminatory policy towards organized labor, we will strongly advocate for policy changes to direct taxpayer dollars and operating rights on federal properties to companies that pursue labor neutrality.

Further, while Starbucks has accused various outside groups of interfering with unionization efforts, it is Starbucks who appears to be weaponizing access to essential healthcare to intimidate and discourage employees from organizing. However, it is not too late for Starbucks to become a model for positive labor relations in an industry plagued by poor worker conditions, exploitative employer practices, and corporate governance dominated by short-term interests.


Given the nature and scale of these concerns—which impact hundreds of thousands of U.S.-based workers and our constituents—we ask that you respond to the points raised in this letter by November 28, 2022. Thank you for your attention to the right of workers to freely organize, and we look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Sincerely,



Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress

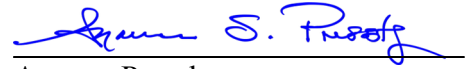


Jesús G. "Chuy" García
Member of Congress

⁶ “Brown, Booker Lead Group of 14 Senators Urging Starbucks CEO to Support Unionization Efforts.” Press release. May 10, 2022. <https://www.brown.senate.gov/newsroom/press/release/sherrod-brown-lead-14-senators-starbucks-ceo-support-unionization-efforts>; See also: “Warren, Sanders, Markey, Blumenthal Blast Starbucks for Brazen, Illegal Union-Busting Campaign.” Press release. October 5, 2022. <https://www.warren.senate.gov/oversight/letters/warren-sanders-markey-blumenthal-blast-starbucks-for-brazen-illegal-union-busting-campaign>



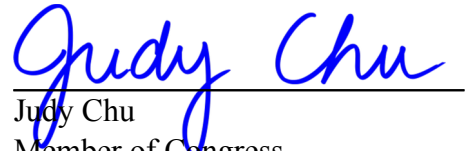
Barbara Lee
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Ayanna Pressley
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Rosa L. DeLauro
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Judy Chu
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Marie Newman
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Katie Porter
Member of Congress



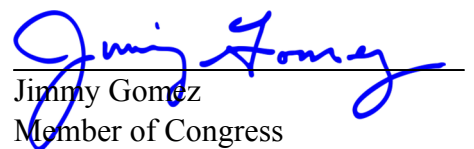
John Garamendi
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CORI BUSH
Member of Congress



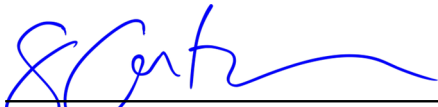
Jimmy Gomez
Member of Congress



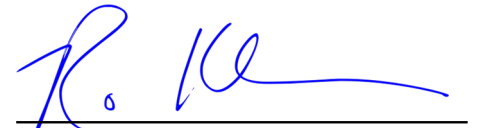
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Ro Khanna
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Troy Carter
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Madeleine Dean
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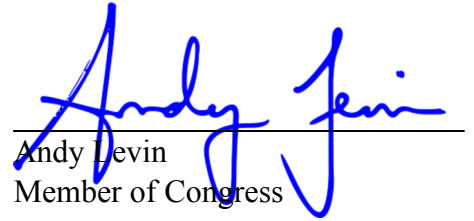
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James P. McGovern
Member of Congress



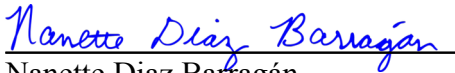
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Member of Congress



Gwen S. Moore
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Karen Bass
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Nanette Diaz Barragán
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Bonnie Watson Coleman
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