

# Baltimore Amazon workers organize in defense of workers' lives

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Baltimore Amazon workers and supporters rally against the company's cooperation with ICE, July 2019. SLL photo: Sharon Black

UPDATE March 31: [Worker at Baltimore warehouse tests positive for virus.](#)

At the time of this writing, workers from eight different Amazon warehouses have tested positive for Covid-19. This includes two separate sites in New York City, [Staten Island](#) and [Queens](#), as well as sites in [Jacksonville, Fla.](#); [Oklahoma City](#); [Brownstown, Mich.](#); [Katy, Texas](#); [Wallingford, Conn.](#); and [Shepherdsville, Ky.](#)

In Maryland, prior to Amazon's announcement that it was hiring 100,000 new workers to meet increased demand during the coronavirus crisis, workers had been receiving notices of mandatory shifts and threatening them with firings and write-ups if they did not report to work.

Baltimore Amazon workers and their supporters drew up a list of demands that they are advocating to protect their lives and the lives of the community.

They have [launched a petition campaign](#) and are advocating five demands and asking supporters and workers to sign on.

**Demand 1: Daily screening of all workers for fever and outward signs of Covid-19.** Weekly testing for all Amazon warehouse workers. Amazon workers are now categorized as essential to public service. Workers must have guaranteed safety networks in place. At any given time, there are 3,000 to 4,000 workers in a single building; this is not just a health risk to those individuals but to the whole community.

**Demand 2: We demand a minimum of \$15 per hour extra added as hazard pay to the \$15 dollar base pay.** Amazon now pays \$2 extra per hour during the quarantine, but the company actually paid \$2.40 extra during the holiday periods — more than it is offering during these extreme health risks. During this crisis and

dangerous conditions, it's not enough. Amazon should not be making extra profit during this pandemic using exploited labor.

**Demand 3: Workers who are elderly, disabled and have weaker immune systems should be able to stay home with full paid sick leave until the conditions are safe for them to return.** We must protect vulnerable workers.

**Demand 4: End write-ups for failing to meet productivity rates and quotas.** Workers need to have the time to physically sanitize their work areas, wash their hands when needed, and practice safety without fear that they will be written up for working too slowly. This not only protects workers; it protects the community that receives packages.

**Demand 5: Extend all the above demands to contract workers at all Amazon facilities.** As we know, all facilities have third party contracted workers who make less than \$15 per hour and who do all the housekeeping and other work, including deliveries.

It's been pointed out that Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos, who is one of the richest billionaires in the world, could easily implement these demands.

Readers can support the Amazon workers' demands by [signing their petition](#).

