Dear Mr. Jassy,

I write to initiate an investigation into the dangerous and illegal conditions at Amazon’s warehouses. The company’s quest for profits at all costs has led to unsafe physical environments, intense pressure to work at unsustainable rates, and inadequate medical attention for tens of thousands of Amazon workers every year. Amazon is well aware of these dangerous conditions, the life-altering consequences for workers injured on the job, and the steps the company could take to reduce the significant risks of injury. Yet the company has made a calculated decision not to implement adequate worker protections because Jeff Bezos, Amazon’s founder, and you, his successor as Chief Executive Officer, have created a corporate culture that treats workers as disposable. At every turn—from warehouse design and workstation setup, to pace of work requirements, to medical care for injuries and subsequent pressure to return to work—Amazon makes decisions that actively harm workers in the name of its bottom line.

These practices have not gone unnoticed. The Department of Labor’s Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and state regulators have repeatedly cited the company for egregious violations of workplace safety laws. Amazon is also currently under investigation by the United States Attorney’s Office for the Southern District of New York for potentially misrepresenting the scope of workplace injuries. Yet Amazon has made no effort to change its illegal practices. Instead, the company has used its outsized power as the country’s second largest private-sector employer to deny workers their right to a safe workplace.

That is unacceptable. Amazon is one of the most valuable companies in the world worth $1.3 trillion and its founder, Jeff Bezos, is one of the richest men in the world worth nearly $150 billion. Amazon should be one of the safest places in America to work, not one of the most dangerous.

If Amazon can afford to spend $6 billion on stock buybacks last year, it can afford to make sure that its warehouses are safe places to work. If Amazon can afford to pay you $289 million in total compensation over the past two years, it can afford to treat all of its workers with dignity and respect, not contempt.

The time has come for Amazon to stop willfully violating workplace safety laws with impunity and commit to changing its operations to protect the health and safety of its workers.

Amazon’s warehouses are uniquely dangerous.

Every day, hundreds of thousands of people across the country work at Amazon warehouses. And every day, the company pushes them past their limits while monitoring their every move.

The work is physically demanding. Workers in Amazon warehouses are always on their feet. Some walk up and down narrow aisles pulling products from bins, logging upwards of 10 miles a day. Others stand at tables packing boxes, making the same repetitive movement for the entirety of their 10-hour shift. And others are constantly bending and twisting to lift boxes—some light, some dangerously heavy—without a meaningful break.

Warehouse workers have to complete these tasks as quickly as possible. Amazon requires workers to meet aggressive productivity goals, but rarely tells workers exactly what these goals are. What workers do know is that they will be disciplined or terminated if they cannot keep up. Afraid to lose their jobs, warehouse workers move as fast as they can to try to meet these goals—a process referred to by Amazon workers as “making rate.”

Amazon has made sure that workers know that slowing down is not an option. From the moment workers arrive for their shifts to the moment they leave the building, the company monitors their every move. Amazon knows how quickly they pick up, package, and move items. Amazon knows when they step off the floor to go to the bathroom or pause to catch their breath. And Amazon uses this information to pressure and intimidate workers into working as hard and fast as possible, pushing their bodies to—and in many cases, past—the breaking point.

The result is that Amazon’s warehouses are uniquely dangerous. In 2022 alone, Amazon warehouse workers suffered nearly 39,000 injuries, 95 percent of which were so serious that they
required workers to either lose time at work or switch to modified duty. Amazon’s rate of serious injuries at its warehouses, at 6.6 injuries per 100 workers, was more than double the rate at non-Amazon warehouses. And despite constituting only a little more than a third of the warehouse workers in the country, Amazon workers suffered more serious injuries than all of the other warehouse workers in the United States combined.

These injuries often leave workers with chronic pain and permanent disabilities. Mark Takakura’s story is just one example. Mr. Takakura, a former Army medic, started working at an Amazon warehouse in DuPont, Washington in the fall of 2020. His job was to pull carts loaded with hundreds of pounds of merchandise to different locations around the warehouse at a pace he found “grueling.” After just six months, Mr. Takakura started experiencing back pain. About a year after he started the job, X-rays showed he had mid-spine degeneration.

As his injury worsened, Mr. Takakura struggled to meet Amazon’s productivity goals. Although the company told workers that they could slow down if they needed to, Mr. Takakura quickly learned that was not the case. When workers tried to move at a safer pace, managers would approach them and say, “You guys need to start picking up. What can we do to improve productivity?” And when Mr. Takakura slowed down to protect his back, he received a warning from his manager that his performance was subpar.

Mr. Takakura expects he will have to manage chronic back pain, and the medical bills that come with it, for the rest of his life. In discussing his experience at the company, Mr. Takakura told a reporter, “Me and my veteran buddies always say, the military was hard, but it was nothing compared to Amazon.”

Mr. Takakura is far from alone. For tens of thousands of workers, the cost of just a few years at an Amazon warehouse is a lifetime of pain. My staff and I have heard concerning stories from workers around the country about the toll that working at Amazon warehouses takes on their bodies. One worker injured both of her wrists within a month of starting at Amazon and had to use her vacation time to recover when the company would not let her slow down to heal. Another worker, who had to stand on concrete floors for 12 hours at a time, needed foot surgery after just two years at Amazon. And a third worker injured her knee so severely she could barely walk the distance from the warehouse parking lot to her workstation, where she had to be on her feet for her entire shift; she has since left Amazon, and now needs workplace accommodations because of her experience at the company. Her story is part of a broader pattern of Amazon treating its

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7 Id. at 4, 7-8.
8 Id. at 2.
10 Id.
11 Id.
12 Id.
employees as disposable: the company has regularly seen turnover rates of 150% per year. At every one of Amazon’s approximately 1,200 warehouses in the United States, and in the homes of too many former employees, there are similar stories of workers who suffered workplace injuries and are now living with chronic pain and disabilities—each of which is a stunning indictment of Amazon’s treatment of its workers.

But the clearest proof of Amazon’s indifference toward its employees is that the company knows how to protect warehouse workers and chooses not to. Warehouses do not have to be dangerous places to work. There are proven methods to make them safe. Most of these methods are straightforward, such as regularly cycling tasks to avoid repetitive strain injuries and using motorized tools so workers do not have to lift and move heavy items themselves. But instead of making the changes necessary to ensure a safer workplace, Amazon allows the unsafe conditions at its warehouses to persist and forces workers to suffer the consequences. Indeed, the reason Mr. Takakura had to pull hundreds of pounds of products to different locations around his warehouse was that Amazon did not provide industry-standard electric pallet jacks and powered cart tuggers to workers at his facility.

Amazon even proved that it could reduce worker injuries: in early 2020, COVID-19 precautions forced the company to slow the pace of work at its facilities, leading to a nearly 27 percent decline in injury rates from 2019 to 2020. When the pace of work increased as pandemic precautions lifted, the injury rates increased as well—in one warehouse by more than 40 percent.

Federal and state regulators have raised serious concerns about Amazon’s practices, which the company has consistently ignored. Since 2015, OSHA has issued Amazon at least 30 hazard alert letters, as well as at least 50 citations for violating workplace health and safety laws. Those letters and citations regularly note inspectors’ observations about unsafe conditions at Amazon warehouses, including workstations that are designed in ways that strain workers’ bodies and employees who “face immense pressure to meet pace of work and production quotas at the risk of sustaining musculoskeletal injuries.” OSHA has offered Amazon a number of ways to

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15 See Long, supra note 9; Wash. Dep’t Labor & Indus., Div. Occupational Safety and Health, Citation and Notice of Assessment to Amazon.com Services LLC, Inspection No. 317961850 at 3 (May 4, 2021) (on file with the Senate HELP Committee Majority staff).
17 Id. at 2.
18 List on file with the Senate HELP Committee Majority staff.
19 Letter from David G. Kearns, Area Dir., Occupational Safety and Health Admin., to Nick Govin, Site WHS Manager, Amazon.com Services, LLC, dba Amazon Fulfillment Center BOI2 at 1 (Jan. 31, 2023), https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/OPA/newsreleases/2023/02/OSHA20230163a.pdf; Letter from Amanda Kupper, Area Dir., Occupational Safety and Health Admin., to Anthony Spinelli, Gen. Manager, Amazon.com
address these unsafe conditions, such as making workstations adjustable and reducing the pace of work. But Amazon has chosen to disregard the vast majority of OSHA’s recommendations.

Similarly, Washington State’s Division of Occupational Safety and Health found that at Amazon warehouses, “pressure is put on workers to maintain [a very high] pace without adequate recovery time” and that there is “a direct connection between Amazon’s employee monitoring and discipline systems and workplace musculoskeletal disorders.” But Amazon has failed to adequately address these safety hazards at its warehouses in Washington and around the country—paving the way for thousands more stories like Mr. Takakura’s.

Mr. Jassy, there is only one explanation for Amazon’s repeated failure to protect its warehouse workers: unacceptable corporate greed.

Amazon’s on-site medical clinics undertreat and underreport workers’ injuries.

When workers are inevitably injured at Amazon’s dangerous warehouses, they go to one of the company’s on-site medical clinics. Amazon operates these clinics as part of the company’s Administering Medical Care to Amazonians Responsibly and Effectively (AMCARE) program. But contrary to the program’s name, the medical care these clinics provide is abysmal.

AMCARE clinics are designed to undertreat and underreport injuries and to get workers back on warehouse floors as soon as possible. Not surprisingly, the way workers are treated at these clinics is appalling. At one New York warehouse, a worker was injured when a falling box struck their head while working the night shift. The worker visited an AMCARE clinic with blood coming out of their ear—a sign of a skull fracture—but was sent back to work. AMCARE staff did not bother to consult a doctor or even monitor the worker once they were back on the floor.

As disturbing as this worker’s experience is, it is not atypical. Workers have shared numerous stories with me and my staff about the substandard care at these clinics and the pressure put on workers to return to work. One of those individuals, Patrick O’Rourke, worked as a “picker” at an Amazon warehouse in Maryland—retrieving items from shelves and walking upwards of 10 miles a day. After less than a year of this work, Mr. O’Rourke started experiencing severe pain in his right ankle. When he told his manager about this pain, he was instructed to go to an AMCARE clinic. But staff at the clinic paid him little attention: instead of thoroughly examining him, they gave him Icy Hot and sent him back to work. When the pain persisted and spread to his

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24 Statement on file with Senate HELP Committee Majority staff.
left ankle, Mr. O’Rourke used his vacation time to seek outside medical help. His doctors told him that his injuries were caused by walking miles on concrete floors, and that he would need to get off his feet to fully recover. Continuing to walk on concrete floors—as AMCARE staff had instructed him to do—would only exacerbate his injuries and compound his pain.

This shockingly inadequate medical care is by design. OSHA requires companies to record only those injuries that call for “medical treatment beyond first aid.”25 By treating workers’ injuries, even serious ones, with no more than ice packs and over-the-counter pain relievers, Amazon evades responsibility for any long-term consequences workers suffer as a result of these injuries.26 And because Amazon is not interested in providing workers with adequate medical care, AMCARE facilities are typically staffed not by nurses or doctors, but by Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs) and athletic trainers. These EMTs and athletic trainers are not equipped to handle the types of injuries that warehouse workers suffer. Nor are they given sufficient assistance: when presented with serious injuries—which happens tens of thousands of times each year—AMCARE staff have to place calls to Amazon’s Physician Hotline for consultations with medical professionals.27 The result is that AMCARE staff are forced to operate with little guidance other than the pressure they receive from the company to undertreat injuries.

This substandard care is combined with a pattern of pressuring workers not to seek medical attention from practicing physicians, effectively making workplace injuries that would otherwise have to be recorded and shared with OSHA disappear.28 Investigators have repeatedly found evidence of EMTs and their supervisors discouraging workers from seeking medical care.29 And current and former AMCARE staff have confirmed that the directions came from Amazon, telling reporters that the company encouraged them to “send injured employees back to the warehouse floor when they likely needed additional medical attention.”30

The company’s efforts to avoid responsibility for workplace injuries have an obvious result: employees’ injuries are exacerbated when they are forced to return to work, leading to longer recovery times and higher medical costs—both of which fall on workers. For too many of those workers, the consequences of their injuries extend far beyond their time at Amazon and lead to chronic pain and disabilities.

28 Id.
30 Brown, supra note 27.
In one story shared with my staff, Amazon steered a worker experiencing severe back pain to a doctor who told her that her back was fine and that she should return to work. When she got a second opinion from a doctor not affiliated with the company, she learned that three discs in her back were injured and that she needed immediate treatment. She had to fight Amazon for months to receive this treatment, worsening her injury and leaving her with long-term pain.

Amazon has also systematically underreported injuries at its facilities and encouraged those providing medical care to do the same. AMCARE staff have said that the company has pressured them “to underreport or misclassify injuries,” and outside medical providers who have treated Amazon’s workers have described being similarly “pressed to keep Amazon’s injuries off the books.” Although OSHA has repeatedly cited Amazon for underreporting injuries, the company has dismissed these citations.

Amazon also intentionally delays or fails to process required paperwork for worker’s compensation, return-to-work, and reasonable accommodation requests, further ensuring the company avoids responsibility for workplace injuries and leaving workers to shoulder the burdens. Patrick O’Rourke, the picker in Maryland, tried to return to work after he recovered from his ankle injuries. But Amazon delayed his return-to-work paperwork for months, repeatedly sending the same forms back to his doctor and refusing to respond to Mr. O’Rourke’s inquiries. Left without an income, Mr. O’Rourke was forced to apply for another job. In his words, “Amazon’s unsafe pace of work means we push our bodies to their breaking point, and when we do get hurt, we get little support or care from our employer. Instead, Amazon puts up a million hurdles for workers trying to return to work, and seems to want nothing to do with workers that have, or are requesting, workplace accommodations.”

Amazon must stop pushing workers past their limits and discarding them when they are no longer useful. In its endless pursuit of profits, Amazon sacrifices workers’ bodies under the constant pressure of a surveillance system that enforces impossible rates. When faced with worker injuries, Amazon provides minimal medical care while hiding those injuries from regulators and workers’ compensation programs. This system forces workers to endure immeasurable long-term pain and disabilities while Amazon makes incredible profits from their labor. That cannot be allowed to continue.

As the Chairman of the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions, I am conducting an investigation into the egregious health and safety violations at Amazon. As part of that investigation, I request the following information by July 5, 2023:

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31 U.S. Dep’t Labor, Occupational Safety and Health Admin., Citation and Notification of Penalty to Amazon.com Services LLC – ALB1 Fulfillment Center, Inspection No. 1610874 at 6-9 (Dec. 15, 2022), https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/OPA/newsreleases/2022/12/OSHA20222343.pdf; Evans, supra note 29.
32 Brown, supra note 27.
33 Evans, supra note 29.
35 Statement on file with Senate HELP Committee Majority staff.
1. Regulators have repeatedly identified straightforward measures Amazon could take to improve worker safety in its warehouses, including fulfillment centers, sortation centers, receive centers, specialty centers, delivery stations, and any other facility serving a warehousing function (herein, collectively, “warehouses”). Please explain why Amazon’s injury rates continue to be significantly higher than the warehouse industry average despite identification of those measures.

2. Amazon claims that the use of robotics in some of its facilities improves safety. However, data shows that the injury rates at the company’s robotic facilities are 28 percent higher than at its non-robotic facilities. Please explain the higher injury rates at Amazon’s robotic facilities.

3. An internal Amazon report from 2021 highlighted the company’s high turnover rate and looming labor crisis, stating, “If we continue business as usual, Amazon will deplete the available labor supply in the US network by 2024.” Please provide the following:
   a. That report, and any subsequent internal or third-party studies, analyses, or reports on turnover or available labor.
   b. An explanation of how the report was created, who commissioned it and for what purpose, and a list of all individuals who received a copy or a presentation regarding its findings.

4. Please provide the following information and documents related to each of the following safety measures recommended by federal and state regulators to address hazards in Amazon’s warehouses: vacuum lifts; spring-platform carts; powered cart tuggers; electric or powered pallet jacks; and height-adjustable carts, platforms, and workstations:
   a. The estimated cost of implementation in all applicable Amazon warehouses, broken down by the estimated cost per warehouse;
   b. For each applicable warehouse, the number currently in use; and
   c. All communications, including but not limited to phone call records, text or SMS messages, internal messages such as those exchanged on channel-based platforms and ephemeral messaging applications, emails, and any records, memoranda, or notes in Amazon’s possession that relate to those communications (herein, collectively, “communications”) and all documents, including but not limited to spreadsheets, notes, working papers, reports, studies, reviews, analyses, and presentations (herein, collectively, “documents”) that include or were provided to any member of Amazon’s Board of Directors, or Amazon’s Chief Executive Officer, Chief Financial Officer, General Counsel, Senior Vice President of Worldwide Operations, or Vice President of Worldwide Workplace Health and Safety (herein, collectively, “executive leaders”) related to the consideration or implementation of the safety measure in the last five years.

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37 The Strategic Organizing Center, supra note 16, at 8-9.
38 Jason Del Rey, Leaked Amazon memo warns the company is running out of people to hire, VOX (June 17, 2022), https://www.vox.com/recode/23170900/leaked-amazon-memo-warehouses-hiring-shortage.
5. For each safety measure listed in #4 not currently in use in at least half of Amazon’s warehouses, please provide a written explanation of why Amazon has chosen not to fully implement the safety measure.

6. Has Amazon ever examined, internally or through a third party, the connection between the pace of work of its warehouse workers and the prevalence or cost of injuries at its warehouses? If so, provide all communications and documents related to such an examination, including all audits, analyses, reviews, or studies, that include or were provided to executive leaders in the last five years.

7. Provide the following information and documents related to output from facilities BF19, BHM1, and STL8 between July 12-19, 2022 and between December 16-23, 2022:
   a. All communications and documents regarding expected or actual output, including but not limited to any goals, targets, expectations, or quotas for employees, positions, departments, or warehouses;
   b. All communications and documents regarding any incentives or bonuses tied to expected or actual output;
   c. All data related to the rate, pace, takt, or speed at which employees completed tasks;
   d. All data related to employee time spent not completing tasks, including but not limited to idle time and time off task;
   e. Any automated performance analyses or flags; and
   f. Any adverse employment actions, including but not limited to warnings, reprimands, write-ups, improvement plans, changes in position or responsibilities, demotions, or terminations.

8. Provide the following information and documents regarding AMCARE for each calendar year from 2019-2023:
   a. The total number of employees or contractors who have treated workers under AMCARE, or provided any other on-site first aid or medical care to warehouse workers (herein, “on-site care”);
   b. A summary table of all on-site care workers organized by credential;
   c. A summary table of the average ratio of on-site care workers to on-site care program supervisors; and
   d. All onboarding, training, instruction, and reference materials, including but not limited to any handbooks, manuals, or guides, provided to on-site care workers or to on-site care program supervisors.

9. Provide the following regarding calls to the Physician Hotline available to on-site care workers:
   a. A list of all individuals who have staffed the Physician Hotline from January 1, 2022, including their credentials and area of medical training or specialty;
   b. A summary table listing the number of calls placed to Amazon’s Physician Hotline from each warehouse from January 1, 2019;
c. The percentage of calls placed to the Physician Hotline from January 1, 2019 that were answered, not answered, or reached a busy signal; and
d. For all calls placed to the Physician Hotline that were answered from January 1, 2019, the 25th, 50th, and 75th percentiles of the call lengths.

Thank you for your very prompt attention to this request.

Sincerely,

Bernard Sanders
Chair
U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions