

Advocacy groups push Sen. Sanders to share Amazon investigation details

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Congress is pressing Amazon to share more information about its safety record—from warehouses to delivery drivers—but some workers' rights advocacy groups say lawmakers aren't moving fast enough.

On Thursday, roughly one year since Sen. Bernie Sanders launched a congressional investigation into Amazon's warehouse working conditions, more than 30 [advocacy groups](#) sent a letter to the Vermont lawmaker asking for a public release of the findings.

Sanders asked Amazon warehouse workers last June to share their stories and the company to share information about its injury rate, employee turnover, pace of work and in-house medical services to treat workplace injuries.

"Given the high stakes of this investigation, we are eager to see progress," the advocacy groups wrote on June 27.

"If lawmakers and regulators fail to take action, the company's dangerous and extractive model will become the standard in warehousing, logistics and retail," the letter continued. "The result will be a punishing, untenable reality for workers in these important jobs."

The groups hoped to get more information about the investigation by mid-July, when Amazon's annual Prime Day sale will mean a spike in orders and the possibility of increased pressure on workers to keep packages moving through the warehouses.

Amazon disputed Sanders' original allegations last June that the company's warehouses are "one of the most dangerous" places to work. The company said it has seen a decline in injury rates for two consecutive years, due to investments in training, workplace "safety professionals," technology and equipment.

But, some advocacy groups, including some of the organizations that signed Thursday's letter, have accused Amazon of failing to tell the whole story in its safety reports. On top of that, the groups say, Amazon still has an incredibly high injury rate at its warehouses.

Amazon spokesperson Maureen Lynch Vogel said the company has cooperated with the investigation and will continue to. "Our safety record has continued to improve," she said. "We continue to work to be best in class."

Sanders, who chairs the Senate's Health, Education, Labor and Pensions, or HELP, Committee, didn't respond to requests for comment in time for publication.

The letter comes at the same time a bipartisan group of senators is looking into another aspect of Amazon's workforce. A group of 29 senators sent a letter to Amazon CEO Andy Jassy in January asking for more information about working conditions for Amazon's network of independent delivery drivers.

Some of the company's Delivery Service Partners, independent businesses that help make deliveries for Amazon, have accused the company of setting an unsafe pace of work and creating a hazardous work environment for drivers, including skipping breaks and making deliveries in [extreme weather conditions](#) without proper equipment.

Those allegations have led drivers to picket 25 Amazon warehouses in nine states, according to the congressional letter.

"Over the last few years, reports of unsafe and unfair working conditions have demonstrated that widespread safety and labor violations appear to be a feature, not a bug, of the DSP program," lawmakers wrote in the letter. "Clearly, further Senate oversight of Amazon's DSP program is overdue."

Amazon disputed the allegations in the letter.

"DSPs are [small business owners](#) and entrepreneurs who are creating

good jobs, with great pay and benefits, for more than 275,000 drivers around the world," Lynch Vogel said. "We strongly dispute the claims in the letter and look forward to sharing the facts."

Ryan Gerety, executive director of the Athena Coalition, one of the advocacy groups that signed Thursday's letter, said the groups look forward to seeing the results of both inquiries but are particularly concerned about the status of the investigation into warehouse working conditions because it has been a year since it began.

"In response to a groundswell of Amazon workers organizing for better conditions across the country, multiple state and federal investigations are currently scrutinizing Amazon's treatment of its workers," Gerety said. "Now, we need action."

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