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March 22, 2022

Howard Schultz  
Incoming Interim CEO  
Starbucks Corporation  
2401 Utah Ave. South  
Seattle, WA 98134

Dear Mr. Schultz:

As you prepare to head back into your former role as Starbucks CEO, I am writing to you with a simple request. Please respect the Constitution of the United States and do not illegally hamper the efforts of your employees to unionize. Like all workers in America, Starbucks employees have the right to form a union and collectively bargain for decent wages and benefits, safe working conditions and reliable schedules.

As you know, since Starbucks workers in Buffalo voted to form a union at two coffee shops in December, the movement to unionize Starbucks is spreading like wildfire. To date, workers have successfully voted to form unions at six Starbucks locations. Further, employees in more than 140 other Starbucks shops in 27 states have filed petitions with the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) to hold union elections which will take place in the coming weeks and months.

Instead of obeying the law, I am deeply concerned that Starbucks has engaged in a massive union busting campaign led by outgoing CEO Kevin Johnson. Workers have been fired for “the crime” of being pro-union. Pro-union employees have had their hours sharply reduced. Work schedules have repeatedly changed. Executives at Starbucks have intimidated and coerced workers into attending captive anti-union meetings. Starbucks has temporarily closed some pro-union shops and threatened to close others and has hired at least 30 lawyers from Littler Mendelson, a notorious anti-union law firm.

The NLRB has found that Starbucks unlawfully retaliated against two Starbucks workers in Philadelphia after attempting to unionize. Just this month, the NLRB issued a complaint against Starbucks for illegal surveillance and threats against union supporters in Phoenix, Arizona. Seven Starbucks workers in Memphis, Tennessee were fired in retaliation for organizing.

I am under the impression that Starbucks respects its “partners” and supposedly adheres to progressive values. If that’s the case, it should behave lawfully and respect the decisions of its employees as to whether or not they want to join a union.

And, by the way, it appears that Starbucks is in a strong position to provide the better wages and benefits its workers are requesting. Last year, Starbucks increased its net income by 561 percent to \$4.4 billion and last quarter Starbucks increased its profits by 31 percent to \$816 million.

In October, Starbucks announced that it would be spending \$20 billion on stock buybacks and dividends to enrich its wealthy shareholders over a three-year period.

Last year, Starbucks gave its current CEO – who now makes over a thousand times more than its median worker – a 39 percent pay raise to \$20.4 million.

The reality is that Starbucks could give every one of its 383,000 workers a \$5,000 bonus and still keep \$2.5 billion in profits from last year without raising prices by one cent.

During the pandemic, while Starbucks workers were exposed to COVID and many became ill as a result of the face to face contact their jobs require, you became \$1.2 billion richer and now own \$4.2 billion in wealth.

If Starbucks can afford to spend \$20 billion on stock buybacks and dividends and provide a \$20 million compensation package to its CEO, it can afford a unionized workforce that can collectively bargain for better wages, better benefits, safer working conditions and reliable schedules.

Mr. Schultz: This is a pivotal moment for Starbucks. As you return to the company, it is time to do the right thing: End the union busting and obey the law.

Sincerely,



Bernie Sanders  
United States Senator