

Resolution in support of a union at FreshDirect

Online grocer FreshDirect has been at the center of controversy surrounding its warehouse in Queens, New York for the past few years. Over that time, elected officials and organized labor have accused the company of union-busting and even alerting immigration officials to the illegal status of some of its own workers—all this to prevent a fair wage increase and better working conditions for employees at the facility.

These issues, unfortunately, remain unresolved. Yet, through success in the marketplace and with the help of generous tax breaks, the company has grown to employ more than 1,000 mostly Latino and African American workers at the facility. The company also recently announced that it would earn \$300 million this year, and is looking for new investors to expand to other cities across the country.

For the past year, a coordinated effort by Teamsters Local 805, UFCW Local 342, elected officials, workers, and workers-rights groups have sought resolution on three points: preventing the use of immigration services for anti-labor practice; a statement of neutrality from the company not to interfere in the right of its employees to unionize; and prevailing wage, fair benefits and better working conditions at a government-sponsored corporation.

The following resolution supports their efforts and preemptively sets standards for the company and others like it, should the exploitive business model developed by FreshDirect for online grocers spread to other cities:

Whereas, the International Brotherhood of Teamsters is an organization founded on the belief that all workers everywhere should be fairly treated, and that the organization should use its resources to protect all those who seek to join the struggle for fair treatment by their employer; and

Whereas, online grocer FreshDirect has grown to become a large and successful company because of the hard work of its labor force, yet refuses to treat them fairly or remain neutral as they seek to form a union; and

Whereas, more than 1,000 men and women from mostly immigrant Latino and African American families work for FreshDirect at far less than the prevailing wage for their industry, and without affordable benefits, pensions, job security, and the ability to formally address safety and other workplace concerns; and

Whereas, federal immigration officials were called in to audit FreshDirect's warehouse days before a scheduled vote to join a union, and more than 300 people lost their jobs; and

Whereas, FreshDirect recently announced that it would earn \$300 million in 2010 and seek to expand to other cities; and

Whereas, FreshDirect has received nearly \$4.5 million in taxpayer funds with another \$12 million guaranteed in New York, and would seek to use the same model in other cities should it expand; and

Whereas, FreshDirect has actively attempted to prevent organizing at its warehouse by disseminating false and misleading information about unions, spreading rumors about firings through its supervisors, and engaging in fear tactics and the intimidation of workers; and now, therefore be it

Resolved, that the National Teamsters Hispanic Caucus calls on the Executive Board of FreshDirect to remain neutral in its workers' organizing efforts; and be it further

Resolved, that the National Teamsters Hispanic Caucus commits itself to aiding the workers of FreshDirect with the resources at its disposal; and be it further

Resolved, that the National Teamsters Hispanic Caucus will coordinate an effort to contact local government officials in the cities to which we believe FreshDirect will seek to expand – Philadelphia, Chicago, Boston, and Washington, D.C. – and advise them to link any government subsidy to legal assurances that the company will pay a prevailing wage and commit to treating its workers fairly.