



January 13, 2017

The Honorable Lamar Alexander  
Chairman  
Committee on Health, Education, Labor and  
Pensions  
U.S. Senate  
835 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Health, Education, Labor and  
Pensions  
U.S. Senate  
648 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 2051

Dear Chairman Alexander and Ranking Member Murray:

As members of the BlueGreen Alliance, a coalition of the nation's largest labor unions and environmental groups, collectively representing millions of members and supporters, we urge you to oppose the nomination of Andrew Puzder to Secretary of Labor.

President-elect Trump's nominee represents an industry that is one of the worst offenders when it comes to labor and employment violations. Since becoming the Chief Executive Officer of CKE Restaurants in 2000, more than half of Hardee's and Carl's Jr. locations investigated by the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) had violated wage and hour laws. Lawsuits have been brought against his company for forcing workers to work without pay. While conditions for workers in his restaurants continued to degrade, including the loss of employer contributions to 401(k) plans, CKE was criticized for using company money for recreation clubs, personal use of the company plane, and a car allowance, while Mr. Puzder received outsized compensation for the industry.

Not only does Mr. Puzder's professional record demonstrate a blatant disregard for working conditions and safety, but he also publicly opposes federal policies that would grow the middle class and invest in worker health and safety. This includes actions like a DOL rule expanding overtime protections that would ensure millions of hard-working individuals and families see fair pay for long hours. He also opposes policies like mandatory sick leave and is a critic of raising the minimum wage, as well as the Affordable Care Act, which expanded healthcare to millions of Americans.

Mr. Puzder has consistently advocated weakening health and safety standards in his industry to benefit the businesses and to the detriment of workers — policies that save lives and prevent irreparable harm and injury.

According to the National Council for Occupational Safety and Health, nearly 53,000 Americans are estimated to die prematurely every year from diseases caused by workplace exposures to toxic substances, about 12 times as many as those who die from occupational injuries. These chemical exposures and their associated health effects are not restricted by factory gates, and often expose workers' families and surrounding communities as well. Since current laws and regulations are too weak to offer real protections, we need a Secretary of Labor that will not only fight to strengthen current regulations but also introduce effective new regulations that will protect the lives of workers and their families.

Mr. Puzder's hostility towards federal protections is not limited to labor standards. He has also downplayed the significance of climate change and derided safeguards protecting the environment. His company even sued, unsuccessfully, to try to silence critics who wanted consumers to be warned about cancer-causing naphthalene allegedly in CKE's foods. The courts rejected CKE's suit, saying that there was evidence that their food contained the carcinogenic chemical, and that this was First Amendment-protected free speech.

America has a significant opportunity to create and maintain quality jobs, drive U.S. manufacturing growth, and secure American competitiveness, while reducing toxic exposure and pollution and protecting our climate and environment. Our U.S. Labor Secretary should see the value that innovating, building, and installing the clean economy can create across the country.

Andrew Puzder's record makes clear that he is ill-equipped to lead a department whose mission is to protect workers and the communities around workplaces. We urge you to oppose his nomination to Secretary of Labor.

Sincerely,

United Steelworkers (USW)

Sierra Club

Communications Workers of America (CWA)

Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC)

Service Employees International Union (SEIU)

Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS)

International Association of Sheet Metal, Air, Rail and Transportation Workers (SMART)

International Union of Bricklayers and Allied Craftworkers (BAC)