

January 15, 2016

John Schoettler, Director – Global Real Estate and Facilities
Amazon, Inc.
202 Westlake Avenue North
Seattle, WA 98109

Dear Mr. Schoettler,

As you are aware, the Block 21 alley vacation passed the full City Council on Monday, January 11th. We have appreciated your willingness to work with the Council regarding this issue. However, you are aware of the various claims from workers and labor unions against Amazon, Inc.'s security contractor, Security Industry Specialists Incorporated (SIS). These claims range from wage theft, discrimination and harassment, discrimination against veterans, and denial of legally mandated breaks and benefits. The Seattle City Council and the Seattle Human Rights Commission have both previously written in regards to this issue.

We are writing this letter today to urge you to take a more proactive approach. As you may know, the Council last year passed legislation authorizing the Office of Labor Standards to proactively – without requiring a complaint – enforce Seattle's labor laws by identifying industries and employers who have a history of labor violations. We are of the opinion that contract employees are a subset of workers less likely to utilize a complaint-based system. As the Chair and Vice-Chair of the committee with policy oversight of the Office of Labor Standards we will both be very involved in efforts to develop this pro-active enforcement effort and will advocate to efforts to be focused on industries that rely heavily on contract employees.

I have attached a study that was conducted by the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 6, which catalogs many claims against SIS and in part states:

“The labor practices of SIS at Amazon show a pattern of disrespect—for workers, veterans, families, local laws, American labor laws and fundamental human rights.

When SIS took over the security contract at Amazon in July 2012, the company fired more than 200 union security officers who had full-time work, regular raises, affordable healthcare and paid time off. This mass layoff was out of step with the customary security industry practice of retaining officers during a transition in security contractors.”

We understand that Amazon Inc. has pledged to continue to monitor this situation and as a part of that effort you have conducted an internal audit. Reportedly, the internal audit found that SIS policies and implementation are consistent with their requirements under the law. However, this contradicts the Seattle Office of Civil Rights findings that at least two people have been harmed. I am asking that you please share the audit with the Seattle City Council so that we can review the methodology and findings of that audit. Additionally, we would be happy to meet with you to further discuss these concerns, and are available to facilitate a meeting between you and representatives from SEIU Local 6.

Sincerely,

Lisa Herbold
Council Chair of the Civil Rights, Utilities, Economic Development, and Arts Committee

Kshama Sawant
Council Vice Chair of the Civil Rights, Utilities, Economic Development, and Arts Committee