



# New York City CENTRAL LABOR COUNCIL

**AFL-CIO**

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Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony before the Council of the City of New York.

I would especially like to thank City Council Speaker Christine Quinn, Council Member Deborah Rose, the Chair of the Civil Rights Committee; Council Member James Sanders, Chair of the Civil Service and Labor Committee; and Council Member Julissa Ferreras, Chair of the Committee on Women's Issues for convening this very important hearing today.

As the President of the New York City Central Labor Council, I represent 1.3 million workers in the City of New York from across many industries and professions.

Our city is clearly in a desperate situation when it comes to the availability of good jobs. We have an astronomical percentage of people unemployed around New York and the situation does not seem to be improving. Walmart has promised to bring jobs to New Yorkers...but at what cost?

Walmart has consistently proven to be an irresponsible and greedy employer, both in the United States and abroad. Currently the defendant in class-action lawsuits regarding its discriminatory labor practices against women and people of color, Walmart shows a lack of respect for its employees.

When Walmart opens, studies have shown that local and small businesses close. More jobs are lost than are created. And the permanent jobs that are created by Walmart are not good jobs. Walmart offers employees poverty-level wages with limited or no health care benefits, which force these employees to register for food stamps and public health care to provide for the basic needs of their families. With this in mind, what would be the cost to the taxpayers to have Walmart opening multiple stores around the city? Considering the current economic situation in New York City, this will only serve to widen an already deep budget deficit.

According to its own audits, Walmart has also failed to allow its hard working employees sufficient breaks and meal times and has pressured employees to work longer hours off the clock without compensation. This blatant disregard for the simple tenets of a work day is something that New Yorkers have fought so long against.

It seems to me that the only party to benefit from Walmart opening in New York City, is Walmart itself.

We cannot afford to have an employer of the size of Walmart subject our citizens to the poor labor standards it has shown at its sites throughout the United States.

New York City has a proud history of cooperation between workers and employers that has been hard fought and has come at too high a cost. A company like Walmart, which refuses to allow, and very often interferes with its employees' rights to unionize, undermines the very freedoms we have worked so hard for and make our city great.

Our aim at the New York City Central Labor Council is to continue an open dialogue in which workers are afforded basic protections under the law and are given a fair opportunity to join a union -- free from pressure or influence from Walmart -- to protect and enhance those freedoms. In seeking any less would be under serving our citizens in the City of New York and the history of the labor movement in New York City.

If Walmart's goal is to engage in commerce in New York City, they must dramatically change the way they operate.

Submitted by John T. Ahern, President of the New York City Central Labor Council, on February 17, 2011 at the New York City Council joint hearing of the Civil Rights, Civil Service and Labor, and Women's Issues Committees.