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Mass Worker Education: Governing from the Shopfloor

Nantina Vgontzas
Sanjay Pinto

urbandemos.nyu.edu

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Nantina Vgontzas

CUNY School of Labor and Urban Studies

Sanjay Pinto

CUNY School of Labor and Urban Studies

The authors welcome feedback on this working paper. Please send all inquiries to: nantina.vgontzas@slu.cuny.edu and sanjaypinto@gmail.com

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Urban Democracy Lab Working Papers are circulated for discussion and comment. They reflect ongoing research and analysis and may be revised. These papers emerge from discussion with community partners but have not gone through a process of community review as is our practice. This paper is part of a series that responds to a rare political opening: the chance to rebuild city governance around affordability, dignity, and democratic control. The papers are designed as practical tools for transition and early governing, with companion briefs for rapid circulation and working-paper versions that provide full rationale, evidence, and implementation detail. They reflect our Real Utopian orientation: feasible design of transformative institutions and policies that are egalitarian, durable, and sustainable.

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Executive Summary

This policy brief builds a framework for mass governance out of workers' daily struggles on the shopfloor, focusing on peer education as an organizing and policy tool. Versed in legal rights, work processes, and relational dynamics, peer educators are uniquely positioned to cultivate shared insights about the harms stemming from employers' exploitative practices. Moreover, they can facilitate experimentation with tactics aimed at eradicating these harms as well as strategic reflection around transforming the power relations that give rise to them. We term this mode of engagement *mass worker education*: democratizing the production of knowledge in service of democratizing the production of goods and services. Recognizing the centrality of intellectual exchange and political deliberation to worker empowerment, this framework envisions workers as not only enforcing labor standards but shaping them as well.

Following on the new mayoral administration's commitment to increase resources for the NYC Department of Consumer and Worker Protection (DCWP), we propose leveraging this potentially enhanced capacity to institutionalize the role of peer educators in implementing worker protections and building workplace organization. As an exemplary case that could be replicated across other sectors, we explore the idea of DCWP supporting the establishment of a mass worker education program in parcel shipping operations across New York City. Administered in partnership with unions and community groups, the program would build training capacity among a corps of warehouse workers and parcel delivery drivers, strengthening their role in enforcing new laws that address harmful industry practices and cultivating broader cultures of workplace safety. We also consider forms of partnership between New York City and New York State that could expand the scope of worker training and legal co-enforcement and extend its reach with increasingly nonunion workforces. Last, we discuss how such a program could empower workers to participate in mass assemblies shaping policy development around data collection, deployment of new technologies, and other pressing concerns, helping pave the way toward mass sectoral governance.

Introduction

In Amazon's vast empire of warehouses and delivery vehicles, the stress and strain experienced by workers constantly in motion marks a stark contrast to the ease with which consumers digitally summon goods. Subjected to stringent performance monitoring and opaquely determined quotas,¹ Amazon workers incur injury, illness, miscarriage, and even death in an effort to keep pace with the algorithm.² As they confront these challenges, the best data we have indicate that many workers are interested in organizing to improve their conditions.³ Yet, the same infrastructure that is used to relentlessly boost productivity is also deployed to stoke fear and suppress union activity.⁴ Alongside other major employers, Amazon has gone so far as to argue that traditional legal pathways for expressing worker voice should be abolished.⁵

Still, closer inspection reveals stirrings of collective action. Throughout Amazon's global network, workers aware of their strategic position in distribution nodes are contesting speedup and discipline.⁶ Through their mastery of company rules and state regulations, workers are refusing unsafe work, challenging productivity writeups, and teaching their peers how to navigate Amazon's increasingly automated managerial systems.⁷ Even

¹ U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions, "The Injury-Productivity Trade-Off: How Amazon's Obsession with Speed Creates Uniquely Dangerous Warehouses," 118th Congress, 2nd Session, 2024; Irene Tung, Nicole Marquez, and Paul K. Sonn, "Amazon's Outsized Role: The Injury Crisis in U.S. Warehouses and a Policy Roadmap to Protect Workers," National Employment Law Project, 2024.

² Matt Day, "Amazon Worker Injuries More Widespread than Thought, Study Says," *Bloomberg*, October 25, 2023; Annie Palmer, "NJ Sues Amazon for Allegedly Discriminating Against Thousands of Pregnant Warehouse Workers," *CNBC*, October 22, 2025; Karen Hamilton, "Delivery Drivers Sue Amazon for Being Forced to Pee in Bottles," *Forbes*, May 23, 2023; International Brotherhood of Teamsters [@teamsters], "Teamsters Mourn Tragic Loss of Life at JFK8," Instagram, April 10, 2025.

³ Beth Gutelius and Sanjay Pinto, "Pain Points: Data on Work Intensity, Monitoring, and Health at Amazon Warehouses," University of Illinois Chicago, Center for Urban Economic Development, 2023.

⁴ Teke Wiggins, "Weaponizing the Workplace: How Algorithmic Management Shaped Amazon's Antiunion Campaign in Bessemer, Alabama," *Socius: Sociological Research for a Dynamic World* 11 (2025): 1-27; Tamara L. Lee, Maite Tapia, Carla Lima Aranzaes, Salil R. Sapre, Spencer Shimek, Sanjay Pinto, and Alí R. Bustamante, "The Militarization of Employment Relations: Racialized Surveillance and Worker Control in Amazon Fulfillment Centers," *Work and Occupations* (2024): 1-38.

⁵ Noam Scheiber, "Amazon Argues Labor Board is Unconstitutional," *New York Times* February 15, 2024.

⁶ Kim Moody, "The End of Lean Production and What Lies Ahead for Labor," *Capital & Class* (2025): 1-21.

⁷ Yackisha Nebot Lopez, "We Closed JFK8 After a Sewage Pipe Burst, One of Many Victories for Amazon Teamsters This Year," *Inequality.Org*, September 25, 2025; Amazon Teamsters [@amazonteamsters], "Amazon Workers Fight Against Unfair Discipline Practices," TikTok, February, 7, 2025.

more, they are exchanging information across the supply chain and articulating a common vision of making company operations safer for themselves and their communities.⁸ Forging solidarities that defy Amazon’s notorious techniques of atomization and control, workers are developing a knowledge base that prefigures more democratic forms of shopfloor governance.⁹

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As an exemplary case that could be replicated across other sectors, we explore the idea of DCWP establishing a mass worker education program in parcel shipping operations

⁸ Nantina Vgontzas, “Amazon After Bessemer,” *Boston Review*, April 21, 2021.

⁹ By “shopfloor” we mean an area where workers create value. Traditionally the term has been used to denote the factory floor, but we expand it to include the classroom, operating room, hotel room, restaurant, carwash, taxi, truck, bus, office, and other work settings of contemporary society.

¹⁰ As discussed in Mamdani’s [campaign platform](#), “Doubling the DCWP budget to \$135M will allow the DCWP to enforce and fight wage theft, prevent and enforce employee misclassification, and root out labor abuse.” The preliminary budget that was recently released by the Mayor falls short of this original goal, but there remains strong public interest in expanding resources for DCWP in order to match the growing volume of workplace complaints received by the agency. For further discussion, see Paul K. Sonn, Tsedeye Gebreselassie, and Laura Padin, “NELP’s New York City Worker Justice Agenda,” National Employment Law Project, December 11, 2025.

across New York City. Administered in partnership with unions and community groups, the program would build training capacity among a corps of warehouse workers and parcel delivery drivers,¹¹ strengthening their role in enforcing new laws that address harmful industry practices and cultivating broader cultures of workplace safety. We also consider forms of partnership between New York City and New York State that could expand the scope and extend reach of this worker training and legal co-enforcement with increasingly nonunion workforces. Last, we discuss how such a program could empower workers to participate in mass assemblies shaping policy development around data collection, deployment of new technologies, and other pressing concerns, helping pave the way toward mass sectoral governance.

Shopfloor Governance and Mass Worker Education

Mayor Mamdani's election demonstrated the power of meaningfully addressing working-class concerns amidst rising inequality and a deepening crisis of democratic governance. In the transition period, close observers have highlighted the importance of not only representing the interests of working-class people but expanding opportunities for them to participate in governance—for example, through mass assemblies where constituents debate public projects and budget priorities at the neighborhood and borough levels.¹² With the recent establishment of the Office of Mass Engagement, the administration is organizing initiatives like “rental ripoff” hearings that complement its efforts to support tenant unions in bankruptcy proceedings and other campaigns.¹³ Echoing municipalist experiments in Europe and Latin America, the institutional backing

¹¹ Typically legislation addresses warehousing and parcel delivery as distinct sectors, but given the educational and organizing benefits of warehouse workers and drivers from the same facilities analyzing their conditions together, we discuss both categories here as a unified industry.

¹² Gianpaolo Baiocchi, Sumathy Kumar, and Celina Su, “Towards Mass Governance in New York City: A Framework and Road-Map,” NYU Urban Democracy Lab Working Paper, 2026; Gabriel Hetland and Bhaskar Sunkara, “Zohran Needs to Create Popular Assemblies,” *Jacobin*, December 22, 2026.

¹³ NYC Office of the Mayor, “Mayor Mamdani Announces Formation of ‘Rental Ripoff’ Hearings,” New York City, January 6, 2026; “Mamdani Acts on Vow to Protect Renters With Move Against a Big Landlord,” *New York Times*, January 3, 2026.

of grassroots tenant power coupled with mass forums provides a foundation for instituting assemblies and other governing mechanisms along geographic lines.¹⁴

Meanwhile, models of mass governance along industrial lines remain underexplored. While the administration has begun expanding its capacities around enforcing labor standards,¹⁵ less attention has been placed on the role that workers can play in this process. We turn to a growing trend of policy co-enforcement around the country, in which state agencies partner with civil society organizations that have established strong relationships with workers over time. Drawing on the knowledge that workers have about their industries and specific worksites, these efforts have achieved important gains in identifying and addressing legal violations.¹⁶

At Amazon's KSBD air hub in Southern California, for instance, workers organizing with Inland Empire Amazon Workers United have collected and shared information about the facility's weak safety protections during extreme summer temperatures, leading to several California Occupational Safety and Health Administration (Cal/OSHA) citations.¹⁷ This work comes on the heels of various shopfloor actions at KSBD and over a decade of worker education and organizing in the Inland Empire's booming warehousing sector, which has raised consciousness around heat safety and contributed to the passage of heat illness prevention standards at the state level. During this period, the International Brotherhood of Teamsters (IBT), Warehouse Worker Resource Center (WWRC), and others have partnered with community groups seeking to

¹⁴ Andrej Holm, ed, "Municipalism in Practice: Progressive Housing Policies in Amsterdam, Barcelona, Berlin, and Vienna," *Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung*, 2022; Gianpaolo Baiocchi, *Militants and Citizens: The Politics of Participatory Democracy in Porto Alegre* (Stanford University Press, 2005); Gabriel Hetland, *Democracy on the Ground: Local Politics in Latin America's Left Turn* (Columbia University Press, 2023).

¹⁵ NYC Office of the Mayor, "Mayor Mamdani Announces \$5 Million Settlement, Reinstatement of as Many as 10,000 Wrongfully Deactivated Food Delivery Workers," January 30, 2026; NYC Office of the Mayor, "Mayor Mamdani Announces Major Expansion of Protected Time Off for 4.3 Million Workers and New Data-Driven Enforcement Strategy," February 20, 2026.

¹⁶ Janice Fine and Jennifer Gordon, "Strengthening Labor Standards Enforcement through Partnerships with Workers Organizations," *Politics and Society* 38.4 (2010): 552-585; Janice Fine, "Enforcing Labor Standards in Partnership with Civil Society: Can Co-enforcement Succeed Where the State Alone Has Failed?" *Politics and Society* 45.3 (2017): 359-388; Linda Delp and Kevin Riley, "Worker Engagement in the Health and Safety Regulatory Arena under Changing Models of Worker Representation" *Labor Studies Journal* 40.1 (2015): 32-53.

¹⁷ Warehouse Worker Resource Center, "Amazon Cited for Serious Health and Safety Violations at San Bernardino Warehouse" [press release], February 21, 2024.

curtail pollution and related impacts of warehouse expansion. The mutually reinforcing opportunities created by warehouse workers organizing around extreme temperatures, communities organizing around environmental harms, and legislation aimed at raising standards on both fronts illustrate the potential for positive feedback loops when the state draws on the insights of frontline workers and communities in confronting intensifying crises like climate change.

In response to another acute threat faced by workers—the rapid deployment of AI technologies—California, New York, and other states have begun enforcing new quota transparency laws in the warehousing sector as well. In 2024, the California Labor Commission fined Amazon almost \$6 million for violating Assembly Bill 701, which requires warehousing employers to provide written notice of quotas on which they are evaluated.¹⁸ Here, too, worker knowledge and organization proved crucial to enforcement, with workers at ONT8 and ONT9 fulfillment centers sharing information with the Labor Commissioner’s Office under the auspices of the California Strategic Enforcement Partnership.¹⁹ Amazon, however, appealed the citations, arguing that it does not use predetermined quotas to evaluate workers. Meanwhile, in New York workers report that the company has been able to sidestep new quota provisions by evaluating workers on the basis of their relative productivity. In pitting workers against each other, including those who have received disability accommodations, this adaptation makes injured and pregnant workers especially vulnerable to the heightened work intensity resulting from performance monitoring and evaluation.

Part of the challenge in overcoming this de facto quota system is Amazon’s insistence that the data it collects on workflows and then uses to train computational systems are proprietary information. Even in contexts with strong data protections like Germany, the company refuses to give works councils access to datasets and algorithms managed

¹⁸ State of California Department of Industrial Relations, "Labor Commissioner Cites Amazon Nearly \$6 Million for Violating California’s Warehouse Quotas Law" [press release], June 18, 2024; Jeanne Kuang, "California Hits Amazon with Fines under Warehouse Worker Law," *CalMatters*, June 18, 2024.

¹⁹ National Employment Law Project, "Advocacy In Action: Movement Gains Momentum to Hold Amazon Accountable for Harms to Warehouse Workers," February 28, 2025; Warehouse Worker Resource Center, "Amazon Cited for \$6Million for Labor Violations" [press release], June 18, 2024.

by engineers often hundreds or thousands of miles away from the worksite—the very measures that would enable frontline workers to intervene more directly in the technical processes that shape their working conditions.²⁰ In challenging the separation that capitalist production engenders between the conception and execution of labor, peer education offers a potential antidote.²¹ At a recent workshop, workers from Amazon’s various divisions came together to analyze the impacts of AI and explore strategies for expanding worker voice in its design and deployment.²² As a collective exercise in knowledge production, the convening showed what may be possible if workers disrupt hierarchical information flows in the workplace and policymaking arenas.

Surfacing worker knowledge can strengthen policy development and enforcement, suggesting wider implications about the intersection of labor renewal and mass governance. For the most part, legislation aimed at supporting efforts to revitalize the labor movement—such as the PRO Act—has been focused on making it easier for workers to organize. As necessary as these measures are for expanding the associational capacities of the working class, they are insufficient for expanding its governing capacities—a process that requires challenging the distinction between the economic and the political under capitalism. Economically, workers are organized as masses based at the point of production, while politically, they are disorganized as individuals only to be activated through parties, neighborhood associations, and other entities.²³ Unions serve as a potentially politicizing force within the workplace, but they largely operate within legal frameworks that regularize collective bargaining while

²⁰ Nantina Vgontzas, “Amazon’s Multisectoral Shopfloor” [working paper], 2026.

²¹ Harry Braverman, *Labor and Monopoly Capital: The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century* (Monthly Review Press, 1974).

²² The September 2025 workshop “On the Move” convened workers, organizers, and technologists to confront the expanding role of AI in the transit, taxi, and logistics sectors. Through sectoral breakout sessions and cross-sectoral assemblies, participants assessed emerging AI harms and codeveloped actionable approaches for governing these technologies in ways that uphold worker rights, safety, and autonomy. The event was facilitated by Sarah Fox (Carnegie Mellon University), Lilly Irani (University of California, San Diego), and Nantina Vgontzas (City University of New York), with support from the National Science Foundation’s Responsible Design, Development, and Deployment of Technologies program. Participants Robert Moore and Jordan Soreff, both of whom work at Amazon, recently reflected on topics discussed at the workshop in an interview with Amazon Teamsters Division Director Randy Korgan, “Amazon’s AI Is Always Watching,” *Shut it Down! The Amazon Teamsters Podcast*, January 28, 2026.

²³ Nantina Vgontzas, “Toward Realignment: Big Tech, Organized Labor, and the Politics of the Future of Work,” *Labor Studies Journal* 48.3 (2023): 267-275.

muting shopfloor contestation. These frameworks not only enshrine capitalist control over production but abstract the task of governing away from workers' daily struggles; to the extent that workers influence the policy process, it is through union representatives appointed to tripartite structures or by lobbying elected officials.

Mass worker education challenges this distinction, emphasizing the agency of workers in more directly determining and enforcing their rights on the shopfloor. We draw inspiration from the factory councils of interwar Europe, experiments with *autogestion* (self-management) in decolonized Africa and Asia, and the *cordones industriales* (industrial belts) and *comunas* (communes) at the heart of socialist projects in Latin America.²⁴ More immediately, we look to occupational health movements that have used peer education to expand popular sovereignty even in politically authoritarian contexts. During the Brazilian military dictatorship, for instance, metalworkers used their firsthand knowledge of the sector's acute injury crisis to expose the state's cosmetic fixes, laying the groundwork for a disability rights movement that made key legislative advances after the fall of the junta.²⁵ In the Indian state of Chhattisgarh, mineworkers partnered with health professionals to train "barefoot doctors" and establish a people's hospital that broke down hierarchies of expertise in the health sector.²⁶ Meanwhile, in the United States, the United Auto Workers (UAW) and Oil, Chemical, and Atomic Workers Union (OCAW) used peer education to strengthen and link health and safety organizing to questions of environmental justice as part of resisting the employers' offensive of the 1980s.²⁷ In the case of the OCAW, discussions facilitated by the union's

²⁴ Dario Azzellini and Immanuel Ness, eds., *Ours to Master and to Own: Workers' Control from the Commune to the Present* (Haymarket Books, 2011).

²⁵ Sofie Alessandra Williams, "Corpos marginalizados e visões radicais de saúde do trabalhador, 1971-1982 [Marginalized Bodies and Radical Visions of Workers' Health in Greater São Paulo, 1971-1982]," guest lecture in "Deslocamentos, trabalho e experiências [Displacement, Labor, and Experiences]," Federal University of São Paulo, Guarulhos Campus, December 2, 2024.

²⁶ Apoorv Khare and Rohit Varman, "Shaheed Hospital: Alternative Institution, Ideology, and Social Movement," in *Alternative Organizations in India: Undoing Boundaries*, edited by Devi Vijay and Rohit Varman (Cambridge University Press, 2018).

²⁷ Josiah Rector, "Environmental Justice at Work: The UAW, the War on Cancer, and the Right to Equal Protection from Toxic Hazards in Postwar America," *The Journal of American History* 101.2 (2014): 480-502; Jacqueline Kurtz, Thomas Robins, and M. Shork, "An Evaluation of Peer and Professional Trainers in a Union-Based Occupational Health Training Program," *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine* 39.7 (1997): 661-671; Craig Slatin, "Health and Safety Organizing: OCAW's Worker-to-Worker Health and Safety Training Program," *New Solutions* 11.4 (2001): 349-374.

innovative education department informed the development of just transition as a policy idea addressing the dislocation of industrial workers.²⁸

These examples illustrate the openings that exist for workers in building shopfloor power and influencing policymaking even amid the neoliberal crisis of democracy. Through spaces of collective experimentation and reflection, workers are able to get at the root of the harms they face: power relations embodied in the production process itself. In the following section, we discuss how a pro-labor administration in New York City can foster the development of such spaces and invite workers into a consistent mode of mass governance.

Instituting Mass Worker Education in New York City

Our proposal for developing an infrastructure of mass worker education integrates the different strands discussed above: recent developments in co-enforcement in cities around the country; models of peer education that promote awareness of legal rights and strategies for responding to workplace challenges; and traditions of shopfloor governance that augment the capacity of workers to transform their conditions.

In New York City, the Office of Labor Policy and Standards (OLPS), a division of the Department of Consumer and Worker Protection (DCWP), has undertaken important legal enforcement measures in recent years. This has included engaging worker and community groups to spread rights awareness and identify violations, including Workers Justice Project (WJP), Los Deliveristas Unidos (LDU), Restaurant Opportunities Center of New York (ROC-NY), and the New York Nail Salon Workers Training School established by the New York Nail Salon Workers Association (NYNSWA) in partnership with the New York Committee for Occupational Safety & Health (NYCOSH) and Adhikaar.²⁹ Especially significant is the progress made in the historically marginalized

²⁸ Josiah Rector, "A Bill of Rights for Plant Closings": The OCAW, the Superfund for Workers, and the Origins of the Just Transition Concept" [working paper], 2026.

²⁹ NYC Central Labor Council, AFL-CIO, "DCWP and WJP Distribute Checks to More Than 150 Relay Delivery Workers," November 21, 2025; NYC Department of Consumer and Worker Protection, "Department of Consumer and Worker Protection and Restaurant Opportunities Centers United to

sector of domestic work. Following the 2010 passage of the New York Domestic Workers' Bill of Rights, OLPS convened focus groups with nannies, cleaners, and home health aides across the city to discuss violations and other issues.³⁰ A parallel set of efforts by Cornell's Worker Institute in partnership with a growing coalition of domestic worker organizations³¹ led to the 2017 formation of the We Rise Nanny Training program, which used a peer education model to train nannies in rights awareness, workforce development, and organizing skills.³² The coalition has since expanded the program to cover other sectors, training hundreds of nannies, cleaners, and home health aides, as well as day laborers and farmworkers. New research shows that New York City, with its strong enforcement of the Domestic Workers' Bill of Rights, has seen major improvements in job quality indicators like overtime relative to the rest of the state.³³

These experiences highlight the importance of not only responding to legal violations after they have occurred but promoting organizing strategies that shift larger workplace cultures. The mass worker education program we envision here would seek to support legal co-enforcement while also equipping workers with resources to exercise greater control over their conditions and address shopfloor challenges before they become acute. To illustrate what such a program could look like, we return to the example of warehousing and parcel delivery. With a rapidly expanding physical and employment footprint amid the ecommerce boom, the industry has attracted growing public concern over its impacts on workers, residents, and the environment. In particular, a decade of

Educate Restaurant Workers about Their Rights," June 21, 2019; NYC Department of Consumer and Worker Protection [formerly Department of Consumer Affairs], "Department of Consumer Affairs Partners with the Nail Salon Workers Association to Educate Salon Workers About Their Rights," March 11, 2019.

³⁰ Ruth Milkman, "Making Paid Care Work Visible: Findings from Focus Groups with New York City Home Care Aides, Nannies, and House Cleaners," NYC Department of Consumer and Worker Protection [formerly Department of Consumer Affairs], Office of Labor Policy and Standards, March 2018.

³¹ The coalition includes the National Domestic Workers Alliance (NDWA) and the NDWA/We Dream in Black—NYC Chapters, Carroll Gardens Association (CGA), Adhikaar, Beyond Care Cooperative, Community Resource Center (CRC), Nanny Bee Cooperative, and Rhiza Collective.

³² Zoë West, Ketchel Carey, and Anne Marie Brady, "Domestic Workers Rising: An Evaluation of the We Rise Peer Training Program," Cornell ILR Worker Institute, 2024.

³³ Emily Wright, Paulina López González, Luis Nuñez, and Kelly Gannon, "Enacting Domestic Worker Bills of Rights: A Quasi-Experimental Analysis of Impacts on Domestic Workers' Working Hours and Earnings," *New Solutions: A Journal of Environmental and Occupational Health Policy*, 35.4 (2025):392-409.

sounding the alarm about Amazon’s invasive deployments of AI and other digital technologies has gained steam, spurring wider discussion among consumers and workers across a variety of industries. Building on existing legislation and organizing in New York, a program of mass worker education could strengthen governance of warehousing and parcel delivery and serve as a model for other industries.

Legislative gains in regulating the industry emerged first at the state level, starting with the 2022 Warehouse Worker Protection Act (WWPA), which addresses the harmful effects of undisclosed production quotas, and subsequently the 2024 Warehouse Worker Injury Reduction Act (WWIRA), which mandates that employers implement an injury reduction program in consultation with workers. In 2025, worker and advocacy groups in New Yorkers for a Fair Economy (NYFE)—a coalition convened by the Alliance for a Greater New York (ALIGN)—turned attention to the question of how to implement this legislation effectively. Amazon Labor Union-International Brotherhood of Teamsters Local 1 (ALU-IBT Local 1), representing 5000 workers at the JFK8 fulfillment center in Staten Island, raised awareness of these laws in the context of its safety campaign.³⁴ Following several worker summits and stakeholder meetings, ALU-IBT Local 1 partnered with the Athena Coalition and National Employment Law Project (NELP) to pilot a training around WWIRA, WWPA, and other legal developments relevant to advancing health and safety in the workplace, as well as around body and hazard mapping and forming workplace safety committees.³⁵ With support from the Consortium for Worker Education (CWE), ALU-IBT Local 1 is now carrying out additional training with shopfloor leaders and building a training center near JFK8.

At the city level, the NYFE coalition is currently mobilizing in support of the Delivery Protection Act (DPA), introduced by New York City Council Member Tiffany Cabán in September 2025. The legislation would require operators of last-mile delivery facilities to obtain business licenses from DCWP and directly hire delivery drivers—such as those

³⁴ Amazon Labor Union-IBT Local 1, “Safety Bill of Rights,” May 2025.

³⁵ U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration, “U.S. Department of Labor Announces Settlement with Amazon Requiring Corporate-Wide Ergonomic Measures at Facilities Across the Country,” *OSHA National News Release*, December 19, 2024.

who have unionized with Teamsters Local 804 at DBK4 and DBK1 facilities in Queens—rather than relying on exploitative subcontracting arrangements that can be used to repress organizing drives.³⁶ Importantly, the legislation would require employers to grant access to an independent certified organization to conduct safety and rights training with workers and managers. Drawing on a recent study commissioned by the City Comptroller’s office that shows an increase in traffic crashes and injuries in areas near last-mile delivery facilities like Maspeth, advocates argue that promoting the safety of workers would also promote the safety of residents.³⁷ As put by Luc Rene, an Amazon Teamster from DBK4, “The impact goes far beyond us. The endless churn of underpaid drivers creates congestion, pollution, and wear on city streets.”³⁸ With labor and community groups hoping for the bill to pass in the current legislative session, DCWP could partner with members of the NYFE coalition to develop a co-enforcement strategy that builds on work around recent state laws.

Focusing on the training provision, we draw on an insight common among many evaluations of union education programs, which show that workers more readily incorporate lessons received through peer education as opposed to more traditional forms of pedagogy.³⁹ A particularly instructive example comes from a peer education program developed to address sexual harassment and violence in California’s janitorial industry. Anchored by the Service Employees International Union-United Service Workers West (SEIU-USWW), a coalition of labor and anti-violence organizations pushed for two rounds of legislation: the 2016 Property Service Workers Protection Act, which mandated anti-sexual harassment training for all janitorial workers in the state, and the

³⁶ Teamsters Local 804, “Organizing at Amazon Grows as New York Teamsters Demand Hearing on Delivery Protection Act,” January 2025; Teamsters Local 804, “Local 804 Renews Demand to Pass the Delivery Protection Act,” February 2026.

³⁷ Office of the New York City Comptroller Brad Lander, “Fast Shipping, Slow Justice: Traffic, Worker, and Climate Hazards in Last Mile Delivery,” Bureau of Policy and Research, November 2025.

³⁸ Luc Rene, “New Yorkers Need the Delivery Protection Act — Now,” *Streetsblog NYC*, February 24, 2026.

³⁹ John Morawetz, Tom Frezee, and Ruth Ruttenberg, “Worker Trainers as Workplace Experts: How Worker Trainers Enhance Safety and Health at Department of Energy Facilities,” *Labor Studies Journal* 46.1 (2021): 33-42; Barbara Hilyer, Laura Leviton, Lynn Overman, and Snigdha Mukherjee, “A Union-Initiated Safety Training Program Leads to Improved Workplace Safety,” *Labor Studies Journal* 24.4 (2000); Clayton Sinyai, Pete Stafford, and Chris Trahan, “Doing it Old-School: Peer-Led Occupational Safety Training in the U.S. Construction Industry,” *McGill Journal of Education* 48.3 (2013): 605-612.

2019 Janitor Survivor Empowerment Act, which created provisions for this training by peer educators known as *promotoras*. Recognizing that managers and supervisors often enable or enact harmful behaviors themselves, the coalition, which included worker leaders, determined that trained janitors—particularly survivors of sexual violence—were best positioned to educate their peers about relevant rights and strategies. Coalition members went on to support the creation of Ya Basta Center in Los Angeles, which has trained hundreds of janitor *promotoras* to provide peer training in workplaces across California. Drawing on trauma-informed methods originally developed by the East LA Women’s Center, janitor *promotoras* facilitate spaces where workers can establish the trust needed to share their stories. These healing spaces have given janitors the confidence to stand with each other in the workplace and speak up against harassment, often joining fights around other issues like wage theft as well.⁴⁰

The current proposal considers how such a model could work in New York City’s warehousing and parcel delivery industry. In collaboration with DWCP and with support from organizations such as CWE, members of the NYFE coalition could set up a training program akin to the *promotora* program in California. Focusing initially on enforcement of the Delivery Protection Act, the program could prepare a core of last-mile delivery drivers and warehouse workers—including those engaging with local unions—to deliver training around issues of misclassification and safety addressed by the legislation. Similar to the *promotora* model, employers across this industry would be required to grant access to peer educators, enabling the program to cover nonunion workforces as well. Through program evaluation, the city could develop an evidence base showing whether and how peer training impacts worker awareness of legal rights and the sense of efficacy they have in exercising these rights. Drawing on the city’s increasing agency capacities as well as its growing movement of labor and community groups targeting

⁴⁰ Sanjay Pinto, Zoë West and KC Wagner, “Healing into Power: An Approach for Confronting Workplace Sexual Violence,” *New Labor Forum*, 2021.

Amazon's abuses,⁴¹ such work could evolve into the development of a training center similar to the Ya Basta Center.

Over time, building on emergent city-state partnerships around childcare and other issues, a peer education program could train a corps of warehouse workers and parcel delivery drivers in promoting awareness and enforcement of the Warehouse Worker Protection Act, Warehouse Worker Injury Reduction Act, and other laws that Amazon and other employers have been known to violate, including those governing the right to organize. Given employers' use of tech-enabled worker surveillance strategies both to enforce unsustainable work rates and to impede worker responses, peer educators could draw connections between these individual and collective forms of disempowerment. By bringing together workers from different parts of logistics operations, a mass worker education program could generate broader knowledge about the infrastructures undergirding harmful practices and foster dialogue about strategies for building worker voice across the supply chain. Moreover, by showing the link between worker safety and community safety, the program could generate support for further legislation like the indirect source rule bills proposed by City Council Member Alexa Avilés and State Assembly Member Marcela Mitaynes, which would regulate air pollution from last-mile operations in New York City and across New York State.

A partnership between the city and state could assist with the development of this program in multiple respects. First, building on the international gains of the Make Amazon Pay campaign, Albany could generate revenue for the peer education training center by imposing a "robot tax" on Amazon and other corporations investing in high levels of automation.⁴² Given that this automation is premised on AI models that are trained using data collected through workplace surveillance, putting robot tax revenue

⁴¹ Prior to recent legislative initiatives, the movement alignment targeting Amazon's abuses gathered strength through the successful 2019 campaign against the company's proposed HQ2 and union drives following the COVID-19 safety strikes of 2020.

⁴² Paul Sandle, "More than 400 Lawmakers from 34 Countries Back 'Make Amazon Pay' Campaign," *Reuters*, December 4, 2020; Bernard Sanders, "The Big Tech Oligarchs' War Against Workers: AI and Automation Could Destroy Nearly 100 Million U.S Jobs in a Decade," U.S. Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee, Minority Staff Report, October 6, 2025.

toward peer education that confronts surveillance would create an intermediate mechanism in regulating automation rather than treating it as inevitable.⁴³

Second, implementing and refining a peer education program at the city level would serve as a test case before expanding its reach at the state level. As seen in the case of WWPA and WWIRA, promoting legal awareness and enforcement across the vast terrain that is New York State presents an enormous challenge, particularly in an industry where standards have deteriorated amid the rise of anti-union employers like Amazon. We look again to the *promotora* program, which harnessed a rich movement ecosystem in LA, the historic birthplace of the Justice for Janitors campaign, toward establishing Ya Basta Center and strengthening statewide rights enforcement. Similarly, a peer education training center based in NYC—bolstered by a strong co-enforcement strategy between DCWP and labor, community, and educational partners—could train workers from across the state. Here, as well, program evaluation at the state level could support efforts at increasing NYS resources for such a center.

Last, and most ambitiously, the state and city could follow the example of worksharing agreements between other government agencies⁴⁴ and establish co-enforcement powers between NYS Department of Labor (DOL) and NYC DCWP, promoting accountability for serial law breakers and strengthening compliance mechanisms. For instance, WWIRA mandates annual worksite evaluations by state-appointed industrial hygienists. Employers are then required to take concrete steps to address whatever ergonomic risk factors are identified in the evaluations. It has not been specified what steps employers would need to take to be in compliance, however. Establishing co-enforcement powers between NYS DOL and NYC DCWP would enable the city government to work with unions and other partners in establishing participatory structures—like workplace safety committees under the NY HERO Act—through which WWIRA compliance procedures could be codeveloped.

⁴³ Nantina Vgontzas, “Logistics and Tech,” as part of the landscape analysis presented at “On the Move: Workers Steering AI Across the Transport Industry,” UC San Diego, September 12, 2025.

⁴⁴ For example, under a [worksharing agreement](#) between the U.S. Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) and the NYC Commission on Human Rights (NYCCHR), NYCCHR can enforce both municipal and federal anti-discrimination laws.

From the Shopfloor to the Assembly

Recent years have seen numerous proposals calling for sectoral governance as a labor renewal strategy in New York and other parts of the country, including wage boards and tripartite bargaining structures.⁴⁵ In their implementation, however, such developments often have been relatively detached from and at times contradictory to grassroots efforts to grow worker power.⁴⁶ This disconnect weakens legal enforcement, hampers ongoing policy development that could be responsive to evolving worker needs and concerns, and limits possibilities for the kind of consciousness raising work that can engender positive feedback loops between policy and organizing. It also constrains the capacity of workers to build direct associational power vis-à-vis employers, clients, and other holders of economic power.

In institutionalizing channels for workers to promote labor standards enforcement and shift broader workplace cultures, an infrastructure of mass worker education could create avenues for them to participate in policymaking as well. Instead of “co-governance” as a process limited to engagement by political and organizational officials, such an infrastructure could amplify the capacity of frontline workers to meaningfully shape policy and participate in governance. Specifically, peer education and other forms of mass worker education could:

- Support workers through a process of recognizing their own agency in responding to workplace challenges;
- Build on workers’ existing job-related knowledge and experience to deepen understandings of industry dynamics and relevant policy debates;
- Foster the creation of worker committees addressing collective concerns at a department and workplace level;

⁴⁵ Alí R. Bustamante, “Balancing Power Between Workers and Employers Requires Sectoral Bargaining,” *Roosevelt Institute*, July 2023; Sharon Block and Benjamin Sachs, “Clean Slate for Worker Power: Building a Just Economy and Democracy,” Harvard Law School Labor and Worklife Program, 2020.

⁴⁶ “NY Farm Laborer Wage Board Refuses to Set 40-Hour Overtime,” Worker Justice Center, 2021; Veena Dubal, “Sectoral Bargaining Reforms: Proceed with Caution,” *New Labor Forum* 31.1 (2021): 11-40.

- Seed the formation of what ALU-IBT Local 1 leaders have called “tech governance councils,” which would combine strategic reflection on shopfloor organizing with proposals for enhancing worker voice in technology deployment;
- Facilitate recruitment of workers into sectoral assemblies aimed at shaping policy agendas and larger strategies for worker empowerment.

Mass assemblies organized at a sector level could provide a forum for workers from different work sites, occupations, and job titles to convene around developing citywide organizing and policy strategies. Such assemblies could deepen member engagement in areas where unions already have a foothold and provide a space for unions to continue deepening their coalitional relationships with other communities. Critically, amidst continued employer attacks on legal rights to free association, mass assemblies could build networks of support for collective action in areas with little or no union density as well. More broadly, partnerships between the city and state in supporting mass sectoral governance could serve as an instructive counterpoint to federal actions that are suppressing worker rights and gutting democratic institutions.

We conclude by returning to our opening vignette of Amazon workers facing and increasingly resisting acute forms of digital surveillance. Amidst growing interest in the regulation of data collection and computational systems, the framework we have proposed here would anchor such governance in the insights of workers who encounter these systems daily. Moreover, in establishing a consistent mode of feedback from the point of production to sectoral assemblies and the halls of state power, it would infuse the policy process with ongoing experimentation, reflection, and refinement. As big tech and other corporate actors seek greater control over nearly every aspect of economic, social, and political life, the new mayoral administration has an historic opportunity to create agile policy mechanisms that can respond “just-in-time” to this rapidly shifting terrain. Toward that end, it could support governance from the shopfloor up.