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**Warehouse Worker
H&M in Secaucus, NJ
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My name is Ana Maria Araujo. I have worked at the H&M warehouse and distribution center in Secaucus, New Jersey for the last four years.

Two years ago, my coworkers and I decided to form a union with UNITEHERE to win health benefits, better wages and a say in our working conditions. We were very concerned about safety issues at our facility, as several of my coworkers had been injured on the job.

Though H&M is a Swedish company with a mostly unionized work force in Europe, where it treats its workers with dignity and respect, when the company found out that we were trying to form a union, it responded with intimidation and harassment. The company held mandatory anti-union meetings where they showed us anti-union videos and tried to persuade us not to form a union.

Several of my coworkers had been through the NLRB election process at previous employers and, because of their experience, we decided to avoid an NLRB election and ask for recognition through a card check procedure. In August of 2003, we independently held a card check where a religious leader verified that a majority of us had signed cards in favor of forming a union.

However, the company did not recognize our decision and continued to harass and retaliate against union supporters. I began wearing a union button and was subsequently fired. Twenty other of my coworkers were also fired.

I traveled to Sweden to talk to workers and the press about what was going on in New Jersey. The Swedish workers and press were outraged and my story became front-page news. Due to the negative publicity, the company gave my coworkers and me our jobs back and agreed to honor the results of a second card check.

In March of 2004, we reaffirmed our desire to form a union and just last month won a first contract which includes benefits for part-time workers, wage increases, health benefits, a pension, vacation, sick and personal leave, and a say in our work schedules.

Though I am happy that H&M finally agreed to honor our decision and negotiate with us in good faith, I do not believe it should have taken me being fired and having to travel to Sweden to shame the company into doing the right thing. Workers have the right to form a union and foreign companies who respect workers' rights at home should not be allowed to come here and violate our laws with impunity.

I implore you to support workers who are going through the same struggles I have faced and fight in Congress for a more fair process that enforces our legal and human right to a voice on the job.

Thank you.