

Migdalia Cruz

**Packaging Worker
Qualipac in Whippany, NJ
Congressional Forum on the Employee Free Choice Act
Trenton, NJ
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My name is Migdalia Cruz. I live in Newark with my husband and our fifteen-year-old son and seven-year-old daughter. I came to the United States from Ecuador seeking a better life for my family and me.

In 2003, I was working at Qualipac in Whippany. We put bottle caps on perfume bottles for perfume made by companies such as Avon, Calvin Klein, and Nautica.

My coworkers and I wanted to form a union with the Teamsters Local 11 because of poor treatment by our supervisors. We wanted respect and a voice in our working conditions.

When the company found out that we were trying to form a union, they responded by increasing the poor treatment and waging a vicious anti-union campaign. They hired the notorious anti-union law firm Jackson, Lewis. We were made to attend intimidating one-on-one meetings with our supervisors who interrogated us about our support for the union. Union supporters were harassed and punished by randomly moving our shifts. Many of us were pressured to resign, but I refused.

I was brought into the manager's office and my pager and cell phone were confiscated. They said they did not want me to record our conversation, but I said they had no right to confiscate my property. They said they would return it after the meeting and they then handed me a letter and told me I was being fired. I immediately filed unfair labor practice charges.

Soon after my firing, the company offered to buy out the most senior workers at the facility, most of whom supported the union. Many of my coworkers took the few thousand dollars that was offered. I eventually won my case and settled for \$7,000, but the company said that the money was part of the buy out and refused to give me my job back. With most of the union supporters removed from the facility, the union campaign ended.

I did not want the \$7,000. I wanted my job and I wanted a union. I wanted respect and a better life for my family and for that I was fired.

I hope you will support workers like me who are being denied our right to form a union and confront employers who deny our rights. Please reach out to your colleagues to strengthen our laws so no worker has to face threats to their family's livelihood to exercise their legal right to form a union.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today.