

March 26, 2019

**Testimony of Cynthia Harper, Former Fuyao Glass America Inc. Employee  
House Education and Labor, Health, Employment, Labor and Pensions Subcommittee  
“Protecting Workers’ Right to Organize: The Need for Labor Law Reform”**

Thank you Madam Chair Wilson, Ranking Member Walberg, and members of the Committee for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Cynthia Harper and I live in Englewood, Ohio.

I worked as a Lamination Specialist for Fuyao Glass America Inc. at the Moraine plant in Ohio from May 2015-October 2017. The plant employs roughly 2,100 workers and occupies nearly two million square feet of space. Located at the General Motor’s formerly assembly plant, it is the largest fabrication plant in the world with the capacity to produce four million automotive car sets and four million replacement glass windshields each year.

When I first joined Fuyao Glass, I was excited to work in manufacturing again since I was employed at the GM truck facility for 14 years. During my first day of orientation, I remember feeling hopeful because the job provided decent wages and the opportunity for growth. But sadly, that is not how my experience panned out.

My job was strenuous and dangerous. I worked in the stretch room where I loaded the polyvinyl butyral (PVB) laminated glass in a machine, input the measurements and then cut the PVB with a blade. There was no lock out, tag out policy which are the steps taken to shut down equipment before maintenance occurs. Not only is dangerous for workers not to have this policy, it is illegal. There were no overhead mirrors in the aisles and no marked pedestrian lanes. Forklifts, golf carts, and people were all using the same lanes, causing mass confusion and fear that someone would be killed accidentally. On numerous occasions, I witnessed people almost getting hit by forklifts because lanes were not properly designated for pedestrians and vehicles.

Workers were also handling hazardous materials with no safety equipment on. When I cut the PVB, I worked with a homemade knife that consisted of a blade and some of the leftover PVB. We were not allowed to wear gloves so someone got cut every day. Management told us they didn’t use gloves and bare hands were needed to properly line up the glass. I worked in an area that had no emergency exit, so if there was a fire there would be no way to get out.

Our safety concerns were not being addressed. I believed that if we had a union, the plant would be safer and more fair across the board. At the end of the day, we all wanted to make Fuyao a better and safer workplace for everyone. A union would give workers a voice in the job and we would have a say in health and safety improvements.

When the company found out we were trying to organize a union, everything changed. Some of the workers were fired and faced retribution. Several workers who served on the Volunteer Organizing Committee (VOC) were prime targets of the company and were fired. Management

saw that we had majority union support and they came up with a plan to break us up. They got rid of 3<sup>rd</sup> shift and split us up by moving workers around to other departments. At meetings, management threatened that if we had a union they would pack up and move their business elsewhere. Fuyao also paid an outside company to come in and hold small group mandatory meetings. They told us negative things about the United Auto Workers Union. I recall a presenter held up a booklet, allegedly from the National Labor relations Board (NLRB) about our rights. But it didn't have NLRB seal on it. He said that everyone had the right to join a union but focused on how bad the union was for workers. We were told that all the union wants to do is take our money and that the union didn't respect us, it just respected the money. They told us if we signed the UAW union card, we would be signing our life away. I found out later that Fuyao paid an outside firm, Labor Relations Institute Inc./LRI Consulting Services Inc. close to \$800,000 to fight against the workers who wanted to form a union.

I was a strong supporter of the union and management knew it. Management saw me handing out handbills at the front entrance of plant which were flyers inviting workers to union meetings. I wore pro-UAW t-shirts. I was featured in the media. All of these actions were perfectly within my right to do under the NLRB. I was also publicly identified as the employee who filed a complaint with the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) against Fuyao. OSHA cited Fuyao for numerous OSHA violations and they were fined. The company retaliated and took steps to push me out. In April 2017, I was demoted into a lower paying and more physically demanding job after refusing to sign a paper attesting that I had been trained on the job. They moved me to the bubble repair job, which was previously a two-man job but I was forced to do it alone or risk losing my job altogether. I questioned HR about their decision to reassign me. Their rationale was that there were too many workers in the lamination department and I wasn't getting along with my co-workers. I knew this wasn't true, especially since the interpreter was doing my lamination when I was moved. This was my first time hearing these new claims as they had previously stated it was because I refused to sign the bogus training paperwork.

My new job was to inspect glass for bubbles. I had to pick up glass that weighed up to 100 lbs. Often, the glass was taller and wider than me. It was physically tough. In June 2017, I was injured on the job and went out on leave. I popped my back while lifting the glass. I was fired while on medical leave for allegedly exceeding available leave time. I was fired just days after the UAW filed a petition to represent a unit of Fuyao employees. It didn't seem fair since I had a good record with the company. My performance and attendance was good. I organized department bowling parties. It didn't seem right.

Unfortunately, the anti-union campaign worked. Workers feared losing their job for supporting the union, and we ended up not getting enough support to form a union. These problems persist at Fuyao. In March 2018, a co-worker of mine was crushed to death between a forklift and nearly a ton of glass. Employees still contact me from the plant saying that they wish they had a union. We need labor reforms that put workers before profits. Senseless deaths can be prevented.

My story and experience are not isolated or unique. The system is unfairly stacked against workers like myself who try to organize a union. I just wanted a fair shake and a voice on the job. I feared that I would die and not see my family again because of the major health and safety issues that were not being addressed at the plant. I believe that workers should have the freedom to form a union and not fear losing their job for supporting the union. Workers should be able to exercise their rights in the workplace without fear of being demoted. Our current laws are not working. More enforcement is needed and workers need more protections.

I look forward to responding to your questions. Thank you.