

U.S. Senator Debbie Stabenow
Chairwoman of the Democratic Policy and Communications Committee
Forum on nomination of Labor Secretary Andrew Puzder

Remarks, as prepared for delivery:

“Today we have invited witnesses from across the county to help us learn more about President-elect Trump’s nominee for Secretary of Labor, Andrew Puzder.

“The Department of Labor is so important because it works on behalf of hard working Americans. The Department enforces workers’ safety laws, sets wage and hour standards, promotes opportunity with worker training programs, ensures free collective bargaining, and protects workers from mistreatment.

“The Labor Secretary's job is to advocate for the interests of millions of Americans who work hard every day and drive our great American productivity. Millions of American workers count on the Department of Labor to advocate for their rights as employees, and the Secretary of Labor is responsible for making sure that happens.

“Unfortunately, I have strong concerns that Mr. Puzder does not believe in this mission. His record reflects he is much more likely to put businesses and special interests first, particularly after a career of making large profits for himself while advocating for policies that would make life more difficult for his workers.

“Mr. Puzder has stated his preference for automation and replacing workers with machines, saying, “They’re always polite, they always upsell, they never take a vacation, they never show up late, there’s never a slip-and-fall, or an age, sex, or race discrimination case.”

“Michigan is home to over 598,100 highly-productive manufacturing workers, many of whom have felt the pressure of competition with automation and globalization. In order for our economy to be strong, we must make sure Americans have the support and skills they need to succeed in today’s environment. What our Secretary of Labor should not do is encourage those jobs to go overseas or be automated.

“Mr. Puzder has also vocally opposed an increase to the minimum wage saying that “it hurts the workers it’s supposed to help”, and calling it a “big mistake”.

“Today, over 101,000 workers in Michigan are earning minimum wage. These workers deserve a living wage, and the Secretary of Labor should be fighting on their behalf. Mr. Puzder has also criticized the Obama administration’s update to the overtime rule, which would extend overtime pay to 4.2 million workers across the country. Updating the overtime rule isn’t only the right thing to do, it will support hardworking middle class families and boost our national economy – making sure that workers are paid fairly for their work.

“I look forward to hearing from today’s witnesses about Mr. Puzder’s business practices and treatment of workers. Thank you for joining us.”