

Union Disengagement: Cresco Labs' Massachusetts Cannabis Cultivation Staff Withdraw from Union

Cresco Labs Cannabis Cultivation Facility Decides to De-Unionize

In an unexpected turn of events for organized labor within the regulated marijuana sector, employees at a Cresco Labs cannabis cultivation site in Fall River, Massachusetts, have opted to de-unionize, as revealed in documents obtained by MJBizDaily.

Union Exit: A Surprising Development

The decision marks a significant departure from the trend of growing unionization in the regulated cannabis industry across the United States. Cresco's Fall River facility's workers, including gardeners and supervisors, initially joined the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 328 in November 2020. However, despite the expiration of their initial contract approaching in June, employees chose to sever ties with the union altogether.

Dissatisfaction with Union Representation

Key factors driving the de-unionization include dissatisfaction with scheduled wage increases, which failed to keep pace with inflation, and perceived inferior benefits compared to nonunion counterparts. Wyatt Brissette, a Cresco employee, highlighted these grievances, emphasizing that the benefits provided by the union did not justify the monthly dues paid by workers.

Majority Support for Decertification

Brissette spearheaded the de-unionization process, formally known as "decertification," with the majority of his coworkers rallying behind the initiative. Out of the 20 union members, 18 supported the move, signaling a widespread desire among employees to return control to Cresco Labs.

Limited Efforts from the Union

Surprisingly, the UFCW Local 328 appeared to make minimal efforts to retain the Fall River employees. Correspondence between Cresco workers and the union's Director of Organizing, Miguel Santos, revealed a lack of proactive engagement from the union's side. Despite offers to renegotiate the contract, the union's response did not resonate with the workers, ultimately leading to the decision to de-unionize.

Implications and Response from Cresco Labs

While this development represents a setback for organized labor in the cannabis industry, Cresco Labs expressed pride in the employees' decision to work directly with the company. Lindsey Dadourian, Senior Vice President of Employee and Labor Relations at Cresco, emphasized the company's commitment to supporting employees' choices regarding organized representation.

Immediate Impact and Future Outlook

The decision to de-unionize has led to immediate benefits for Cresco's Fall River employees, including higher wages and eligibility to receive company stock as part of their compensation. However, the move does not affect other Cresco employees or ongoing union representation at the company's cultivation facility in Leicester, Massachusetts.

While the Fall River facility's de-unionization is a rare occurrence in the cannabis industry, it underscores the importance of employee autonomy and reflects evolving dynamics within the regulated marijuana sector. As Cresco Labs continues to navigate labor relations, maintaining positive relationships with local unions remains a priority for the multistate operator.

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