UNITEHERE! Local 11

September 8, 2026

Yavapai County Board of Supervisors
1015 Fair Street
Prescott, AZ 86305

Yavapai County Sheriff
255 E. Gurley St.
Prescott, AZ 86301

Attn: Supervisor Board Chair Compton; Supervisor Check; Supervisor Jenkins; Supervisor Kuknyo; Supervisor Mallory; Yavapai County Sheriff David Rhodes and Heather Cole, Business Manager

Re: Replace Aramark Through RFP for Food Service, Commissary, and Banking for Yavapai County

Dear Sheriff Rhodes, Ms. Cole, Board Chair Compton, Supervisor Jenkins, Supervisor Check, Supervisor Kuknyo, and Supervisor Mallory:

We are writing to apprise you of our concerns regarding Aramark's history with carceral food service, both in Arizona prisons and in departments of corrections across the U.S. Aramark has drawn criticism in other jurisdictions around the country for its prison food service, and advocacy groups have alleged that the company has a long history of providing substandard food in prisons.[i] Advocates and formerly incarcerated individuals have alleged various problems, including tainted food, food substitutions, and other health and safety issues.[ii]

UNITE HERE Local 11 is a labor union representing over 32,000 hospitality workers in Southern California and Arizona who work in hotels, restaurants, universities, convention centers, and airports, including hundreds of workers employed by Aramark. In an effort to better understand how Aramark is performing under the many contracts the company holds in the State of Arizona, including with the state prison system, we are examining records and speaking with formerly incarcerated individuals about their experiences.

We have developed serious concerns about Aramark's record in carceral food service in Arizona and urge you to conduct a thorough audit of Aramark's carceral food service operation and select an alternate food service provider for Yavapai County. Over the past five years, Aramark has lost 59 carceral food service contracts in the United States.[iii] We recommend that you reach out to relevant jurisdictions to determine whether their rationale for replacing Aramark with a different vendor can inform your decision.

With the fiscal challenges faced by Yavapai County and the necessity of a tax hike (Prop 497) to support operations for the Jail District, it is critical to hold private contractors accountable for the great responsibility they bear for providing safe, sanitary, nutritious meals for both those who live and work in our carceral, juvenile and mental health facilities.

Here are a few of our key findings:

1. **Concerns of Potential Overbilling**

Recently disclosed documents from the Arizona Department of Corrections, Rehabilitation, and Reentry (ADCRR) show that Aramark appears to have consistently billed for more meals than it served each month for the period of Aug - Dec 2025. The overcharges range between $77,778 (Sept 2025) to $137,241 (Dec 2025).[iv]

According to a recent report by the Center for Science in the Public Interest and the Carceral Nutrition Project, Aramark has allegedly overbilled correctional agencies in Kentucky, Ohio, and Florida, with potential overpayments ranging from $57,193 to $5 million.[v]

2. **Department of Health and Safety Violations**

A sampling of quotations from recently disclosed Arizona Department of Health and Safety (ADHS) Food Establishment Inspection Reports from August 2025 to April 2026 across nine state complexes relay the following:[vi]

- Sanitation issues:
  - "Several dozen trays were wet nested in preparation for being used for lunch service. Several of these trays had both wet and dried food debris stuck to the surface, despite being stored as clean."[vii]
  - "In the clean dish drying rack, observed multiple pans with visible food debris still on them."[viii]
- Food storage issues:
  - "Observed lettuce, milk, bologna and other TCS foods in the walk-in fridge with internal temperatures between 50-52°F…All cold holding foods must be held at or below 41°F."[ix]
  - "In the hot box, measured a pan of cooked beef patties and cooked noodles that were measured between 109-134°F…Please ensure all hot TCS food items are maintained at 135°F or above to prevent harmful bacteria growth."[x]
  - "Observed cooked meat patties sitting out of temperature control above hot holding steam table with internal temperature of 98°F…All hot holding foods must be held at or above 135°F.[xi]"
- Pest Issues:
  - "Observed an accumulation of rodent droppings between two pallets in the food storage warehouse"
  - "In dishwashing area, observed 10+ live cockroaches under the scrape sink and garbage disposal. Also observed 3 live cockroaches behind the ice machine."[xii]

Again, the recently published report by the Center for Science in the Public Interest and the Coalition for Carceral Nutrition is particularly timely and examines Aramark's performance across the country in state, county, and city prisons and jails. One of its key findings is that Aramark's food safety practices are allegedly inconsistent, putting incarcerated people at risk for acute illness wherever they fall short, and that Aramark's alleged cost-cutting measures, which the report alleged often take place the expense of quality, overbilling, and contract violations, casts doubt on the value the company claims to provide to its taxpayer-funded correctional clients.[xiii]

Aramark lost its contract with Mississippi DOC in 2021 after inmates alleged that food was often "spoiled, rotten, molded or undercooked" and that portions allegedly were too small.[xiv]

3. **Litigation and Risk**

   a. **Market Consolidation**

As you currently contract with Aramark for food services, commissary, and banking, we want to make you aware of a class action lawsuit against Aramark filed December 1, 2025, which alleges that Aramark Corp, Aramark Correctional Services, LLC and Aramark owned Union Supply Group are in violation of the West Virginia Consumer Credit and Protection Act for conflict-of-interest concerns that can arise from market consolidation. The case alleges that Aramark provides inadequate meals that in turn drives individuals to purchase food at its commissary by engaging in a scheme by which "it extorts profits from incarcerated consumers and their loved ones by failing to provide incarcerated people with adequate, free daily meal services, so they are driven to purchase commissary food, meals from Aramark's Fresh Favorites program, or iCare packages."[xv] Arizona has similar consumer protection laws.[xvi]

An audit conducted by the KY auditor general found that Aramark allegedly used food from its regular meal production for the Fresh Favorites program. According to the report, "This suggests that food products used in the regular meal production were being paid for by both the DOC and inmates through their payments for Fresh Favorites meals."[xvii]

b. Lawsuits against Aramark

In its bid for the Arizona Department of Corrections Rehabilitation & Reentry (ADCRR) in 2024 Aramark itself disclosed over 40 ongoing cases under litigation[xviii] and disclosed 35 cases in its response to Pinal County's RFP for Commissary and Banking Services.[xix] Cases among those listed involved allegations of potentially serious issue with the company's prison food service operations, including allegedly inadequate meals, mishandling of religious meals, medical violations, food handling, safety, sanitation, sexual assault and harassment, discrimination based on sex, retaliation, wage and hours claims, and injuries from eating foreign objects, falls, and burns.[xx]

c. Aramark's Labor Practices

This year alone, the Industrial Commission of Arizona recently found in favor of at least four low-wage food service workers alleging that Aramark has owed them unpaid wages since the start of its airline catering operations in November and December of last year. Of the four claimants, ICA findings indicate that at least two workers were paid an effective hourly wage rate **below the state's 2025 minimum wage of $14.35/hr.** If true, this would place Aramark in violation of the Arizona Fair Wages and Healthy Families Act, in addition to A.R.S. § 23-350 et seq.

Under the Arizona Fair Wages and Healthy Families Act (AFWHFA), **state agencies, localities, and political subdivisions are empowered to consider violations of the AFWHFA in their decision to award public contracts, licenses, or subsidies to a given firm. See A.R.S. § 23-364(I).**

We urge you to consider Aramark's track record across the US and in our state facilities as you evaluate the company for your RFP. We urge you to seriously consider an alternate provider that will be better able to fulfill the needs of Yavapai County - a contractor that is ideally unburdened by substantial litigation risk and that can deliver on a decent fair price without sacrificing the health, safety of welfare of those who live and work in your carceral facilities.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter. Please feel free to contact me or UNITE HERE Local 11 Lead Researcher Jordan Fein (jfein@unitehere11.org) to discuss this matter and our concerns with Aramark's carceral food service business further if you have any questions.

Signed:



Susan Minato

Sent via email: district1@yavapaiaz.gov, district2@yavapaiaz.gov, district3@yavapaiaz.gov, district4@yavapaiaz.gov, and district5@yavapaiaz.gov and web.sheriff@yavapaiaz.gov, heather.cole@yavapaiaz.gov & via UPS overnight

[i] Private Food, Public Harm: Privatized Food Service in Prisons and Jails, Center for Science in the Public Interest & Coalition for Carceral Nutrition, the Center for Science in the Public Interest, Updated May 1, 2026, https://www.cspi.org/PrivateFoodPublicHarm-fullreport.
[ii] What It's Like to Eat Some of the Worst Prison Food in America, Stephen Katz, July 26, 2016 https://www.vice.com/en/article/what-its-like-to-eat-some-of-the-worst-prison-food-in-america/
[iii] 252530 - Detention Food Services Pinal County https://pinalcountyaz.bonfirehub.com/publicContracts/224270#!/ 252530RFP Contract Exhibit C - Contractors Response - Aramark.pdf p55.
[iv] ADCRR Diets-Billed vs Diets-Served, Response to records request received Aug 24, 2026.
[v] Private Food, Public Harm: Privatized Food Service in Prisons and Jails, Center for Science in the Public Interest & Coalition for Carceral Nutrition, updated May 1, 2026, p. 12. https://www.cspi.org/sites/default/files/2026-05/carceralNutritionProject_report.pdf.
[vi] ADHS Reports, Response to records request received Aug 20, 2026.
[vii] AZ State Prison Food Safety Inspections 9-1-2024 to 8-4-2026_Part2.pdf p.114, Response to records request received Aug 20, 2026.
[viii] AZ State Prison Food Safety Inspections 9-1-2024 to 8-4-2026_Part2.pdf p.69, Response to records request received Aug 20, 2026.
[ix] AZ State Prison Food Safety Inspections 9-1-2024 to 8-4-2026_Part5.pdf_p93, Response to records request received Aug 20, 2026.
[x] AZ State Prison Food Safety Inspections 9-1-2024 to 8-4-2026_Part5.pdf p156, Response to records received Aug 20, 2026.
[xi] AZ State Prison Food Safety Inspections 9-1-2024 to 8-4-2026_Part2.pdf p.42, Response to records received Aug 20, 2026.
[xii] AZ State Prison Food Safety Inspections 9-1-2024 to 8-4-2026_Part2.pdf pgs. 15, 69, Response to records received Aug 20, 2026.
[xiii] Private Food, Public Harm: Privatized Food Service in Prisons and Jails, Center for Science in the Public Interest & Coalition for Carceral Nutrition, updated May 1, 2026, p.14 https://www.cspi.org/PrivateFoodPublicHarm
[xiv] "Mississippi Prisons End Contract with Controversial Food Provider," Justin Bey, April 27, 2021, https://www.cbsnews.com/news/mississippi-prisons-aramark-end-contract-team-roc/.
[xv] US District Court Southern District of West VA -Charleston Division: https://www.nclc.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/Aramark-complaint.pdf Item #3
[xvi] A.R.S. §§ 44-1401–16; 44-1521–34.
[xvii] EXAMINATION OF THE KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS' FOOD SERVICES CONTRACT WITH ARAMARK CORRECTIONAL SERVICES, LLC, Kentucky Auditor of Public Accounts, October 7, 2010. https://www.auditor.ky.gov/Auditreports/Special%20Exams%20%20Performance%20Documents/2010ARAMARKreport.pdf.
[xviii] CTR072628 Contractor Proposal Response/REVIEW Attachment 9 - Experience and Capacity Response.pdf, ADCRR, pgs. 6-7, https://app.az.gov/page.aspx/en/ctr/contract_manage_public/82481 .
[xix] Exhibit C Responders Proposal, Pinal County, pgs. 113-114 https://pinalcountyaz.bonfirehub.com/publicContracts/224373#!/.
[xx] AZ Contract CTR072628 Contractor Proposal Response: Aramark: Attachment 9 – Experience and Capacity, April 3, 2024, pages 6-7 https://app.az.gov/page.aspx/en/ctr/contract_manage_public/76835,

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