

From the Desk of:

DARCEY EDWARDS
STATE REPRESENTATIVE
DISTRICT 31



April 30, 2025

Testimony of Josh Tompkins

Chair, Washington County Chamber Public Policy Committee

Before the House Committee on Labor and Workplace Standards

In Opposition to SB 916 A

Chair Grayber, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Josh Tompkins, and I serve as Chair of the Public Policy Committee for the Washington County Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber and its members care deeply for the workforce. A strong, stable, and talented workforce is fundamental to the success of businesses. We also recognize that workers at times may feel like the deck is stacked against them in bargaining for wages, hours, and working conditions. We empathize with this reality and do not question its sincerity.

Nonetheless, we strongly oppose SB 916 A for the following reasons:

- First – The bill inappropriately utilizes unemployment insurance benefits to pay people who choose not to work while participating in a strike. Any compensation paid to striking workers is currently, and should continue to be, the province of the union – not Oregon businesses and taxpayers.
- Second – the bill presumes that employers enjoy a superior bargaining position – which is not accurate. The threat of a strike is a powerful weapon that keeps employers at the table in search of solutions except in the rarest circumstances.
- Third – Oregon's business climate is already tarnished. The two states with comparable, though not equivalent, laws on the books are New York, and New Jersey, which also happen to be the only two states in the nation with a worse business climate than Oregon.
- Finally, the most pernicious impact of this law will be its contribution to declining public trust in government. The business community in Washington County has been a steadfast partner with school districts and local governments. We have supported school bonds and levies, local option levies for public safety and parks, and major infrastructure projects like the \$1.6 billion Willamette Water Supply Program. It will be increasingly difficult to ask our

members to support higher taxes and rates if the return on investment is fewer school days and declining educational outcomes, longer response times for public safety, and inflated project costs.

We have enough problems in Oregon. From the lack of attainable housing, chronic homelessness, and a drug fueled mental health epidemic to the accelerating attrition of Oregon's chip industry to other states.

SB 916 A will undoubtedly exacerbate these trends as administrators of government are forced to bargain away resources they do not have and cannot afford to combat the very real threat of publicly subsidized strikes.

SB 916 A places the interests of public servants above the public's interest in high quality and affordable public services.

We respectfully request that you reject SB 916 A