

Chair Taylor, Vice Chair Bonham and members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Ruben Arroyo and I am a proud member of BCTGM Local 364.

I strongly encourage your support of SB 916 which would repeal the law blocking unemployment benefits to workers on strike. This bill would help ensure that workers are able to stay afloat while fighting for a fair contract.

I work at Nabisco and was on strike for 42 days in 2021. I have children, children who are on my health insurance and who rely on me to support them. While I was on strike my mortgage payment, utility bills, and child support payments did not stop - and neither did I.

In order to keep myself afloat I took a job working for amazon, I worked the night shift, doing deliveries at 2am. I happen to have twins, and at the time they were getting ready to enroll in college. My daughter offered to defer a semester to help with the financial strain, but I knew I couldn't let that happen. My parents lived paycheck to paycheck and I knew this strike was an opportunity to show my kids that I was fighting for a better life for them. My kids got to see why unions matter and they watched me live my values.

During the strike, I would go to the strike line then immediately to Amazon. When I would finally get home I would wonder if I was going to be able to keep my house. I couldn't borrow against my 401k, I could only work harder. If a policy like this would have existed for us it would have been life changing. Not just for me, but also for my family.

I knew that we were striking for all the right reasons and I never wavered, but that did not mean it was easy. The world does not stop when you go on strike, and you make huge sacrifices, I really hope that you all can understand why workers do this at the limit we are pushed to.

I strongly encourage you to support this policy.