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On Behalf Of: Oregon Nurses  
Committee: Senate Committee On Labor and Business  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB916

As a nurse, I have dedicated my career to providing care and advocating for the well-being of patients. However, ensuring quality patient care is not just an individual responsibility—it is dependent on fair working conditions, adequate staffing, and the ability of healthcare workers to advocate for themselves and their patients without fear of financial devastation.

Strikes and labor disputes are not decisions taken lightly, especially in healthcare, where patient safety is our top priority. When nurses and other healthcare workers engage in labor actions, it is often in response to unsafe staffing ratios, lack of resources, and unfair labor practices that compromise the quality of care we can provide. The right to stand up for safe working conditions should not come with the penalty of financial ruin.

By denying unemployment benefits to workers engaged in a labor dispute, we are effectively punishing individuals who are fighting to improve workplace conditions. Many nurses and healthcare workers live paycheck to paycheck. If forced into an indefinite labor dispute without any financial support, many will be unable to afford housing, food, or childcare, making it nearly impossible to stand up for necessary changes in the workplace. This creates an unfair advantage for employers, discouraging workers from using their legal right to collective action.

Moreover, allowing unemployment benefits in these situations acknowledges the reality that labor disputes do not just affect employees—they impact entire communities. When healthcare workers are forced to accept unsafe conditions due to financial coercion, patient care suffers. Protecting workers' rights to advocate for themselves ultimately protects patients by ensuring that nurses can fight for the resources they need to provide safe and effective care.

I urge you to support this bill to ensure that workers, including healthcare professionals like myself, are not placed in an impossible position when advocating for better working conditions. No one should have to choose between standing up for safety and putting food on the table.