

Submitter: Isabel Walker

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Labor and Business

Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB916

Hello, my name is Isabel Walker and I work at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival as a member of IATSE Local 154. I support 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.

The Providence nurses have been on strike for around a month now, and it really takes a toll. I know they wouldn't be doing it if they didn't absolutely have to. The things that workers are asking for are reasonable and necessary demands - and when they have to strike, that means it's serious. I know that I hope I never have to exercise my right to strike, because I love going to work and I love getting to do what I do. We just want to be able to afford to do so. I think one of the main reasons that workers are afraid to go on strike is the loss of a paycheck, and knowing that there are UI benefits would create a necessary safety net and allow workers to get their needs met.

Ending this exclusion of UI benefits for strikes that go over 7 days will help make sure that workers like me can continue to pay our rent, feed our families, afford prescription medicine, and pay our COBRA health care payments while out on strike. This will mean that we aren't forced into an unsafe or unfair contract just because the employer can starve us out. And those UI payments will work as intended: to also put money back into the local economy at times of economic distress.

Strikes are always a measure of absolute last resort. Please help ensure that workers like me – nurses, teachers, grocery and construction workers and so many more – are not forced into unsafe or unfair contracts simply because we can't afford to exercise our legally protected right to strike. Please vote yes on SB 916.

Thank you.