

Submitter: Rosalie Pedroza
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Labor and Business
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB916

I urge lawmakers to pass Senate Bill 916 to support striking workers in Oregon.

In 1995, after months of negotiations, we went on strike for a week. As a single mother of two, making full time wages so low I qualified for food stamps, I was living paycheck to paycheck and even a week's loss of pay was devastating but I wanted better for me and my family so I went.

With this bill, I would still have to meet UI criteria of a one week waiting period and would not have qualified. When I heard about the bill before fully understanding it, I was dubious. Now I know it is not just a handout to striking workers, it's a way to prevent bosses from starving us out and leaving us without medical insurance, This is not a way to live for long because it doesn't replace our full pay, but it will help. The cost to the UI system is less than 1%. And most importantly it is a further incentive to quickly reach an agreement.

Workers strike only after every other option has been exhausted. In many cases, they continue working under expired contracts for months or years, making sacrifices because they care about their jobs. SB 916 is a simple, fair measure to ensure that when workers must strike, they don't face total financial devastation.

Employers often use healthcare benefits as a weapon in labor disputes. Cutting off healthcare during a strike puts workers and their families in an impossible situation. Unemployment benefits are a reasonable safeguard that will prevent workers from falling into crisis while they stand up for fair wages and conditions.

This bill is low-cost, does not significantly impact employers, and would result in shorter strikes and fairer contracts. Oregon should pass SB 916 and support its workers.