



Crook County

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February 27, 2025

Subject: Opposition to Senate Bill 916

Dear Senator McLane and Representative Breese-Iverson,

I am writing to you as a Crook County Commissioner to express our strong opposition to Senate Bill 916, which proposes to allow public employees to qualify for unemployment insurance while in a labor dispute or strike. As a representative of Crook County, I am deeply concerned about the serious fiscal impacts this bill would pose to county governments across Oregon, including ours.

Unlike private entities, county governments are unable to absorb sudden and unpredictable increases in employment costs. This bill would obligate counties to reimburse the state's unemployment insurance fund dollar-for-dollar for benefits paid out to individuals, further straining our financial resources. Furthermore, the inclusion of an emergency clause means that this bill could take immediate effect during the latter part of our 2024-2025 fiscal year— a period when counties like ours lack the budgetary flexibility to address the augmented demands on our unemployment insurance risk pools.

Our preliminary estimates indicate that should SB 916 pass, Crook County could face additional expenditures of approximately \$15,000 per week. This substantial financial burden would necessitate reductions in essential public services including but not limited to Sheriff, Jail Services, Public Health, Search and Rescue, Emergency Management, and Wildfire Response. Each of these services is crucial for the safety and well-being of our community members, and any cuts to them could have dire consequences.

Moreover, the bill's provisions could potentially incentivize prolonged labor disputes, as the current one-week waiting period for unemployment insurance benefits is considerably low. This could lead to extended strikes, further increasing the financial strain on public employers who are already unable to raise property taxes to mitigate these unforeseen costs.

As Crook County faces a challenging budget deficit heading into the fiscal year 2025-2026, it is imperative that we consider the long-term fiscal health of our county and the services we provide. Senate Bill 916, in its current form, would significantly undermine our efforts to maintain financial stability and continue delivering necessary services to our residents.

Therefore, I urge you to oppose SB 916 and consider the profound implications it would have on public employers and the communities they serve. Thank you for considering this matter with the seriousness it deserves.

Sincerely,

X 

Susan Hermreck
County Commissioner