

Submitter: Chris Steele
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Labor and Workplace Standards
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB916

I support Senate Bill 916 because it will give striking workers a fair shot at bargaining for the wages and conditions they deserve.

The movie, TV and commercial production industries are facing existential threats. Some of these are unavoidable, like the impacts of AI, and globalization. But others can be mitigated through well negotiated contracts, between the employers and the unions. But the unions must have leverage in order to do this. All too often, employers count on workers not being able to afford to even consider striking in order to freeze them out of fair contracts. We should all remember a Hollywood producer who said the quiet part out loud, during the WGA strikes, when he shared that he "...wants the WGA strike to carry on until union members start losing their homes..." That's utterly despicable, and unfortunately that's what we are up against.

We need this leverage to negotiate fair contracts.

A strike is never the first choice for workers. Before a strike happens, there have been extensive negotiations, often stretching across years. Workers do everything they can to avoid striking because they know it will mean financial hardship.

But when employers refuse to budge, workers are often forced into an impossible situation. Many companies even cut off healthcare benefits during a strike to pressure employees into accepting unfair deals. If employers have the right to take away healthcare, then workers should have the right to access unemployment benefits.

UI is not a handout—it's a partial wage replacement that helps workers avoid total financial collapse. SB 916 has an extremely low cost to the UI fund and a low impact on employers. What it does do is ensure fairer negotiations and prevent unnecessary suffering.

Oregon should pass SB 916 and stand with working people.