

Submitter: Tracina Stewart

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Labor and Workplace Standards

Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB916

I am testifying in support of Senate Bill 916, which would end the exclusion of Unemployment Insurance benefits for workers when they are on strike.

The nurses and Hospitalist doctors at Providence St Vincent Medical Center bargained in good faith for over one year. Over that time Providence was unwilling to even meet halfway. They would not compromise in order to offer a better contract.

We worked the entire year of 2024 with no contract and no increase in wages or benefits. Our wages and benefits package were inferior to those given to nurses at OHSU and Kaiser. As a result of Better wages and benefits, many new nurses were taking jobs at the higher paying hospitals and leaving Providence hospitals understaffed and nurses overworked and exhausted. Struggle nurses left Providence hospital in order to seek jobs at these better paying and better staffed hospitals.

With no improvement or compromise from Providence, We had to make the difficult decision to go on strike. We were a very united front of nurses in consistently showed up to the strike line each day. We were on strike for 46 days. This was an extreme financial burden to most nurses on strike. Additionally, Providence announced that they would be cutting our healthcare benefits/Insurance. Nurses and their family members relied upon their health insurance to treat chronic conditions, including cancer, seizure, disorders, ADHD, etc. These individuals were not able to cease their treatment or to go without much needed Medications.

Providence was able to pay for replacement nurses while staff nurses were on strike. Replacement nurses received \$100 an hour or more, Free hotel Accommodation, Free airline transportation to and from, Free transportation to and from work and Hotel, Cash in hand for meals, etc. The amount of money spent by Providence for replacement workers for three weeks would've easily paid for the wage increases and Improvement in benefits For Providence nurses.

Providence had endless financial resources to continue paying strike nurses while their own nurses were holding the line. Providence nurses on strike had no chance. Ultimately, we had to accept a new contract that included no increase in wages or benefits despite 46 days on strike and unpaid. Nurses can no longer go without pay, and they certainly cannot go without health insurance for themselves or their families.

Large corporations with Virtually endless financial resources Will always win. And employees/Union members will always lose.

Unemployment insurance does not replace a workers wages. But at least it may give workers a fair chance when going up against wealthy, powerful employers.

Strikes don't happen overnight. They are the result of long, difficult negotiations, and they are always the last resort. Many workers remain on the job under expired contracts for years, choosing to keep workplaces running rather than striking. But when an employer refuses to negotiate fairly, a strike becomes necessary.

Right now, employers can strip healthcare benefits away from striking workers. That is an enormous burden on working families. SB 916 is a small but vital protection that would ensure striking workers can still put food on the table and afford basic expenses.

This policy has minimal costs and will not place a significant burden on the unemployment insurance system. Instead, it will lead to shorter, fairer strikes by ensuring employers can't simply wait workers out.

Oregon must pass SB 916 and make the bargaining process more balanced.