

Submitter: Suzanne Zuniga

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.

I was lucky enough to be in a union the last decade of my career. I was even luckier that although we came close, we never had to strike, because although striking is the only real leverage workers have, strikes are absolutely devastating for workers, and many simply cannot survive a strike. This legislation will level the playing field, giving workers a fair chance to bargain in a time when corporate power is strangling everyone but the 1%.

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.