

Submitter: JoDee Hunter

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.

As an RN who recently was forced into a 46 day strike, the health executives absolutely leveraged the worker's time away and inability to have financial income against worker's to get them to accept a deal that didn't really provide safe outcomes for patients. The deal offered the best benefit to the health system, NOT the employees, and NOT patients! Nurses do NOT strike lightly. We tried for 18 MONTHS to get a fair deal before we were forced to strike. Many nurses placed their family's well being below the need for safe practices. The executives didn't have to do this. Worker's need support to help balance the playing field. Please support this bill and support Oregon worker's and families.

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.