

**Subject:** AFT-Oregon Urges You to Vote Yes on SB 916

Chair Grayber and members of the Committee,

My name is Hollie Oakes-Miller, and I serve as Vice President of Political Action at the American Federation of Teachers - Oregon (AFT-OR), which represents thousands of members in higher education across the state. I am writing on behalf of our members to urge you to **vote yes on SB 916**, which would repeal the law blocking unemployment benefits for workers on strike.

Striking is never a decision taken lightly—it is a last resort when employers refuse to negotiate in good faith. Yet under current law, Oregon workers who exercise their legal right to strike are unfairly denied unemployment benefits, while employers continue operating with minimal consequences. **This imbalance puts workers at a severe disadvantage, extending strikes and forcing many to accept subpar agreements simply to survive.**

I know this struggle firsthand. As a part-time faculty member at Portland Community College and an active member of my union, I saw how close my colleagues and I came to declaring an impasse after more than a year of negotiations. We were prepared to strike for a fair contract, but for many of us—especially part-time faculty earning around **\$30,000 a year with student debt and basic living expenses to cover**—the fear of financial devastation was overwhelming. No worker should have to choose between fighting for fair wages and paying their bills.

**SB 916 would help level the playing field, ensuring that workers can stand up for better wages, benefits, and working conditions without facing immediate financial ruin.** If employers can cut off health care during a strike, workers should have access to unemployment benefits to help cover COBRA costs, rent, groceries, and other essentials.

Our members—educators, classified staff, and other higher education workers across Oregon—are counting on you to stand with working people. **Please vote YES on SB 916.**

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Hollie Oakes-Miller  
VP of Political Action  
AFT-Oregon