

Testimony in Opposition to SB 916

House Committee on Labor and Workplace Standards

4-30-2025



Chair Grayber, Vice-Chairs Elmer and Muñoz, and Members of the Committee:

I'm Tiffany Edwards, Vice President of Policy and Community Development at the **Eugene Area Chamber of Commerce**. We are the second-largest Chamber in Oregon, representing roughly 1,400 members—the vast majority of which are small businesses. In fact, fewer than 1% of our members have over 500 employees. Our membership also includes the city, county, school districts, university, both community colleges, and utility providers—spanning both public and private sector employers. I'm here today to respectfully **express our Chamber's strong opposition to Senate Bill 916A**.

Oregon's unemployment insurance system was built on a straightforward, fair principle: to serve as a safety net for workers who involuntarily lose their jobs. SB 916 would fundamentally change that — extending benefits to workers who voluntarily walk off the job to strike. This shift would break the longstanding integrity of the UI system and create significant unintended consequences.

First, it would force tens of thousands of small businesses — most of whom will never experience a labor dispute — to subsidize strikes occurring at large organizations they have no connection to. In a state where employers already fund one of the most expensive UI systems in the nation, additional strain would inevitably drive up payroll taxes, harming small businesses still navigating economic uncertainty.

Second, SB 916 would change the incentives around labor disputes. Reducing the financial risk of striking would likely lead to more frequent and longer strikes, further destabilizing the economy and disrupting supply chains that countless businesses — and workers — depend on. It may also reduce the urgency and willingness for both sides to come to the table in good faith to resolve the underlying issues — delaying solutions and prolonging conflict.

Finally, we are deeply concerned about politicizing Oregon's unemployment fund. For decades, business and labor agreed: the UI system should stay focused solely on involuntary job loss. Diverting the system for any cause, no matter how well-intentioned, sets a dangerous precedent for future misuse.

We urge you to preserve the integrity of Oregon's unemployment insurance system and to oppose SB 916. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Tiffany Edwards

Vice President, Policy & Community Development

Eugene Area Chamber of Commerce