



**Service Employees International Union – Oregon State Council**  
525 NE Oregon St. Portland, OR 97232

To: House Committee on Labor and Workplace Standards  
From: Mike Powers, SEIU Oregon State Council  
Date: April 30, 2025

RE: Support for SB 916 A

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

My name is Mike Powers, and I'm here today on behalf of the SEIU State Council to voice our support for Senate Bill 916 A. This important legislation ensures that workers who are compelled to strike can access unemployment benefits – providing a vital safety net that allows them to care for their families during labor disputes. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

SEIU Oregon represents over 85,000 dedicated workers across the state, including caregivers, wildland firefighters, road crews, tax professionals, food safety inspectors, custodians, security officers, and many others. While some of these workers have the legal right to strike, others do not. For those who can strike, it is always a last resort – used only after extensive negotiations and persistent employer refusals to offer fair wages, safe working conditions, or basic benefits.

Expanding access to unemployment insurance for striking workers reflects some of our nation's core values: to shield workers from unsafe, exploitative, or substandard working conditions. It would also improve job satisfaction, strengthen workforce stability, and help raise labor standards – ultimately reducing both the frequency and duration of strikes.

Large corporations and well-funded nonprofits often have the resources to wait out a strike. Meanwhile, workers face severe financial and personal hardship – and in some cases, the loss of health insurance. That’s why it is critical that striking workers have access to unemployment benefits to help cover essential expenses, including healthcare.

We appreciate the thoughtful revisions made to address concerns from opponents. Under the current version of the bill, SB 916 A, striking workers would face a 14-day waiting period – double the standard seven days for other unemployed workers – and would be required to repay any benefits if their strike settlement includes back pay.

Importantly, the Oregon Employment Department has found that the projected cost of this policy would not trigger an increase in employer UI tax schedules. This confirms what we’ve believed all along: that the bill strikes a responsible balance – supporting workers' rights while minimizing unintended impacts on small businesses, local governments, and school districts.

Senate Bill 916 A is about fairness. Working people are the foundation of Oregon’s economy. They deserve the tools to advocate for better jobs and the means to support their families when standing up for their rights.

For all these reasons, SEIU Oregon respectfully urges your support for SB 916 A. Thank you for your time and consideration.