



Caring for Oregon

May 1, 2025

To: Chair Grayber, Vice Chairs Elmer and Muñoz, Members of the House Committee
On Labor and Workplace Standards

From: Russell Lum, Political Organizer, Oregon Nurses Association

Re: **Support of SB 916 A**

Dear Chair Grayber, Vice Chairs Elmer and Muñoz, and members of the committee,

Thank you for receiving this testimony on Senate Bill 916 A on behalf of the Oregon Nurses Association (ONA). ONA represents a diverse community of more than 21,000 nurses and healthcare professionals throughout Oregon. Together we use our collective power to advocate for critical issues impacting patients, nurses, and healthcare professionals including a more effective, affordable and accessible healthcare system; better working conditions for all healthcare professionals; and healthier communities.

We view strikes as carefully — and painfully — chosen labor actions when workers are at such extremes to raise the alarm that nothing else works. The alarm has always been pertaining to: safe patient care, safe working conditions, respect for workers and their desire for stability and retention in the workforce, and the standards that a leading, high-quality healthcare system needs. None of these causes reflect selfishness. ONA members are taking care of our communities when on the job, and, even, when out on strike when necessary in the respect that their labor actions are driving better standards.

Strikes are able to drive standards higher *when they can come to favorable conclusion*. It is often that strikes do not. Workers do not come away with what they want from many strikes; upon conclusion of many strikes, there is not adequate bonus money that makes workers whole. So there is enormous risk in going on strike. As our hundreds of written testimonies from ONA nurses show, our members are willing to take this risk.

There is more than enough bravery and sacrifice in the act of going on strike alone to not make it especially damaging in the area of personal financial precarity. But employers hold out, relying on exactly that.

SB 916 A responds to this problem, and can bring about fair contracts faster, by having workers' back. SB 916 A recognizes that being low on money to fight for fairness is a condition worth aiding.



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That suggestion is fundamentally a values question of course. Is our social safety net well used on these sections of the Oregon workforce? Our reply is to remind that these are sections of the Oregon workforce whose welfare is intertwined with the welfare of the state and every Oregonian.

ONA hopes the legislature would share the values of our healthcare-worker members in this wide lens — when they are caring for the sick, day in and day out; when they are formulating fair demands for their contracts; and when they need heightened support at rare times of heightened alarm.

Thank you for opportunity to advocate for this important proposal.

Sincerely,
Russell Lum