

Submitter: Caitlin Carr
On Behalf Of: OFNHP
Committee: Senate Committee On Labor and Business
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB916

My name is Caitlin Carr and I'm a Registered Dietitian and a member of Oregon Federation of Nurses and Health Professionals (OFNHP) union. I support SB 916 which would repeal the law blocking unemployment benefits to workers on strike. This bill would help ensure that myself, my colleagues and healthcare workers are able to stay afloat while fighting for a fair contract.

I, myself, have not experienced striking. However, my peers who are represented by various union organizations share their concerns with me when striking or when a strike is looming. They express feeling stuck between a rock and a hard place when it comes to discussing unsafe staffing levels, proposed wage or benefit cuts, and the financial strain of striking—especially when it impacts their families or personal finances. They express the concern that if a health emergency occurs during their strike, or just before, and they are unable to access pay or benefits how incredibly costly this would be for them and/or their families.

Unemployment insurance benefits provide an essential safety net for Oregonians.

Ending this exclusion of UI benefits for strikes that go over 7 days will help make sure that workers like me can continue to pay our rent, feed our families, afford prescription drugs or pay our COBRA health care payments while out on strike. This will mean that we aren't forced into an unsafe or unfair contract just because the employer can starve us out. And those UI payments will work as intended: to also put money back into the local economy at times of economic distress.

Strikes are always a measure of absolute last resort. Please help ensure that workers like me – nurses, teachers, grocery and construction workers and so many more – are not forced into unsafe or unfair contracts simply because we can't afford to exercise our legally protected right to strike. Please vote yes on SB 916.