

Submitter: Donna Marks
On Behalf Of: BCTGM Local 364
Committee: Senate Committee On Labor and Business
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB916

Chair Taylor, Vice Chair Bonham and members of the committee,

My name is Donna Marks and I'm a BCTGM Local 364 union leader and a worker at the Nabisco facility in NE Portland for 20 years. In 2021, we were out on strike for 43 days.

The decision to strike was not one we took lightly. We worked 4 years after our contract expired in 2016, negotiations had grown stale. The company withdrew from our pensions in 2018 after claiming impasse, and refused to negotiate in good faith for all those years. In April of 2020, we fell subject to a 1 year agreement that was to offer protections and safeguarding in the height of covid. It did not and the company was in breach of several articles of this agreement that led to unfair labor practices.

In August of 2021, after yet another failed attempt to negotiate with our employer who would not meet in good faith, the workers in Portland led a nationwide strike against Nabisco/Mondelez.

To say this was a choice would be false: the choice was really between staying in an unsafe job where we were forced to work days and weeks on end, or to quit and allow a new worker to be subjected to that same treatment – all while the company made record-breaking profits.

Most of my co-workers and I were forced to take a second job during the strike. I worked as a delivery driver, meaning that between the strikeline and the delivery job I was working 60 hours a week just so I could continue to make ends meet.

While we were out on strike, my daughter was in the hospital with an ongoing and difficult chronic illness. Consequently, I was terrified to lose our health care and what that would mean for my daughter, myself and our family. About half-way through the strike, we were cut off from healthcare. Our insurance was extended for one month under COBRA, which was a Covid benefit from the federal government that was dropping off on October 1, 2021. That is not something that is offered any longer. If that benefit had not been in place at that time, there is no doubt that I would have been forced into choosing between paying my rent, feeding my family, and paying for my daughter's medical bills.

That is why I'm supporting SB 916 today. To be able to get unemployment insurance during this time would have fundamentally changed our lives. The contract we last

voted on had many flaws. But I think there's reason to believe it passed because so many of my co-workers across the country couldn't hold out any longer. That's the reality for far too many workers and this bill will help change that for Oregonians.