



Senate Labor & Business Committee

February 6, 2025

Testimony in Support of SB 916

Chair Taylor, Vice-Chair Bonham, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Kathy Lara, Policy Analyst for the Oregon Center for Public Policy, and I respectfully submit this testimony in support of SB 916 on behalf of the Center. The Oregon Center for Public Policy is a nonpartisan think tank that uses research and analysis dedicated to improve the economic outcomes for all Oregonians, especially those struggling the most to make ends meet.

Unemployment insurance (UI) is a critical program designed to provide economic stability to workers and their families. Yet under current law, workers who engage in a lawful strike — often as a last resort to improve workplace conditions — are excluded. This exclusion undermines good faith bargaining, in which workers face a difficult choice between fighting for fair wages and safe working conditions and risking their ability to provide for their families.

Support Economic Stability for Workers and Families

Workers strike when other options to win fair pay, better benefits, or safer working conditions have been exhausted. However, without income, they face an immediate financial crisis, struggling to afford necessities like rent, food, and healthcare. By extending UI benefits to striking workers, SB 916 would help mitigate these hardships, allowing workers to stand up for their rights without the fear of financial ruin.

Promote Fair Bargaining Practices

The imbalance of power between employers and workers is exacerbated when the former can endure prolonged labor disputes while the latter faces economic devastation. Providing UI benefits to striking workers levels the playing field, discouraging employers from using prolonged disputes to starve out workers and encouraging more meaningful commitment to the collective bargaining process.

Our mission is to achieve economic justice for all Oregonians through research, analysis, and advocacy.

2121 SW 4th, Suite 304 ■ Portland, OR 97201 ■ 971-279-4732 ■ OCP.org



Fair negotiations lead to better workplace conditions and long-term economic benefits for all Oregonians.

Strengthen Oregon's Workforce

Workers are the backbone of Oregon's economy. Policies that support their ability to advocate for fair treatment strengthen our workforce and contribute to a more just and equitable economy. By passing SB 916, Oregon would join states like New York and New Jersey in recognizing that unemployment benefits should serve all workers, including those exercising their legally protected rights.

Protect Workers at Minimal Cost

Expanding UI benefits to striking workers will be a lifeline for strikers, while having very modest costs. Strikes often end quickly, with [86 percent of strikes ending within 14 days](#). A recent study estimates that extending UI to striking workers would amount to about [0.24 percent of total UI expenditures](#). This is a small investment when considered in the context of the benefits I've outlined above, including improving working conditions in the state.

The Oregon Center for Public Policy urges this committee to support Senate Bill 916 as a necessary step toward ensuring that no worker is left out because they exercise their right to strike. Expanding UI benefits to striking workers affirms Oregon's commitment to fairness, economic security, and the rights of working people.

We urge you to support SB 916.

