



To: Chair Taylor, Senate Committee on Business and Labor
From: Madison Walters, UFCW Local 555
Date: 2/6/2025

SUPPORT FOR SB 916

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

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of SB 916. My name is Madison Walters. I am a political liaison and member of United Food and Commercial Workers Local 555, which represents tens of thousands of workers in grocery, retail, manufacturing, and healthcare. We take pride in acting as a strong collective voice for working people.

We strongly encourage your support of SB 916, which would allow striking workers to draw unemployment benefits. This bill would help ensure that workers are able to stay afloat while fighting for a fair contract.

At UFCW 555, our members are no strangers to collective action and the impact it has on the livelihoods of our fellow workers. A worker's right to strike is one of the most critical tools in our toolbox to advocate for a fair and equitable contract— a contract which not only guarantees appropriate wages and benefits and working conditions for our members, but also ensures quality products and services for our communities.

In a world where accountability is often rare and hard-won, this bill is one way to empower Oregon's workers to demand better from their employers.



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Ultimately, this policy will come down to a value decision on whether Oregon's workers – nurses, public servants, grocery store workers and so many others that make our economy run – deserve parity with the ability of shareholders and investors who are able to safely coordinate their resources for mutual gain. And of course our society has laws and programs in place to help mitigate those costs and risks for investors and shareholders:

- Lower tax rates on capital gains,
- The Troubled Asset Relief Program,
- SBA grants and tax-advantaged loans,
- And even loan forgiveness programs for businesses.

All these and more are examples of public subsidization of shareholders collectivizing their resources to achieve their economic objectives. Surely, a level playing field would mean that workers are able to collectivize *their* resources without having to imperil their housing or their family's next meal.

As a union who has seen firsthand the ways that a strike allows workers to fight back and demand better treatment for both themselves and their patients and customers, we emphatically agree that these workers deserve to access the benefits they are rightfully owed.

We are grateful to the committee for its consideration of SB 916, and we strongly urge your support with an "aye" vote.

Thank you,

Madison Walters
Political Liaison
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