

JP

February 5, 2025

Testimony in Support of UI for Striking Workers (SB 916)

Dear Legislators,

I am a Registered Nurse at PeaceHealth Hospice. I am writing in strong support of Senate Bill 916/House Bill 3434, which would make striking workers eligible for unemployment benefits in Oregon.

Workers do not take the decision to strike lightly. It is an action of last resort, taken only when all other attempts to secure fair wages, safe working conditions, and reasonable staffing levels have been exhausted. Strikes come at great personal sacrifice—workers lose their paychecks, put their financial security at risk, and face enormous uncertainty about their future. But they do it for the greater good: to protect their patients, their profession, and the sustainability of the Oregon healthcare system.

When my bargaining unit voted to strike, we could only authorize a two-week walkout because we simply could not afford to go without pay for longer. Large corporations like PeaceHealth know this and use it to their advantage. They hired temporary replacement workers—scabs—who provided shockingly inept care to our patients. And when we returned, instead of negotiating in good faith, the next contract offer we received was even worse than the one we had before the strike. Because we couldn't afford to strike longer, we lost ground. Our patients lost. Our community lost.

Had striking workers been eligible for unemployment benefits, we could have held the line longer, forced PeaceHealth to come to the table with a serious offer, and secured meaningful improvements for our patients and colleagues. Instead, the financial hardship forced us back before we had the leverage to make real change.

Oregon must stand with workers—not just in word, but in policy. This bill would provide a critical safety net, allowing workers to take a stand against massive corporations without the immediate threat of losing their homes, defaulting on loans, or being unable to feed their families. Striking is an act of commitment to justice, but it should not lead to poverty.

I urge you to pass Senate Bill 916/House Bill 3434 and ensure that workers fighting for fair treatment and safe conditions have the financial support they need to stand up for themselves, their families, and their communities.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

JP

Hospice RN