



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

The Oregon Education Association (OEA) represents over 41,000 educators and education service professionals across the state, spanning pre-K through our community colleges. Our members include teachers, bus drivers, custodians, teacher assistants, nutrition specialists, community college faculty and staff, and many others who work tirelessly to support Oregon's students.

The Oregon Education Association strongly supports **SB 916**, which would provide limited unemployment insurance (UI) benefits to workers on strike. OEA bargains **239 contracts** across the state, typically with each contract spanning 2-3 years. Over the last 20 years, OEA has negotiated approximately **1,750 contracts**. Since 2000, there have been only **eight strikes**, demonstrating how rare strikes are in education—less than **0.5% of all negotiations result in a strike**.

If **SB 916** had been in place, those eight strikes since 2000 would have resulted in just **nine weeks of unemployment insurance eligibility** statewide. To put this into perspective, this equates to **less than one week of eligibility every two years**—a negligible impact on the state's unemployment system. Furthermore, because school districts budget for teacher salaries as part of their annual financial planning, the provision of UI benefits during a strike would not represent an additional financial burden unless substitute workers were hired to replace striking staff.

Strikes occur only when all other avenues to address critical challenges in schools have been exhausted. These challenges often include overcrowded classrooms, inadequate resources, and insufficient supports for students. Educators strike to advocate for better learning conditions for students, many of whom are their own children. Striking educators not only fight for their students' futures but also risk their own financial stability to ensure classrooms are safe, equitable, and supportive learning environments.

While educators are often at the forefront, workers across all industries face similar challenges. Whether they are in education, healthcare, manufacturing, or public services, workers strike to advocate for fair wages, better working conditions, and essential resources. This bill would provide a modest, temporary safety net for all workers who, like educators, sacrifice their pay to improve the systems they work within.

SB 916 acknowledges this reality and ensures that those who fight for improvements in their workplaces are not left financially vulnerable. This bill would not normalize strikes but rather demonstrate that Oregon values its workers and the critical role they play in shaping the state's future.

We urge your support for SB 916. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of Oregon's educators, students, and communities.