

Submitter: Ralf Youtz  
On Behalf Of: PCCFFAP  
Committee: Senate Committee On Labor and Business  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB916

My name is Ronald "Ralf" Youtz. I'm a Portland Community College instructor and a member of AFT Local 2277, the PCC Federation of Faculty and Academic Professionals union.

Please vote YES on SB 916, which would repeal the law blocking unemployment benefits to workers on strike. This bill would help ensure that workers are able to stay afloat while we fight for a fair contracts.

During our last round of contract bargaining, PCC administration failed to bargain in good faith until PCCFFAP filed for mediation. Only mediation and a credible strike threat from our union got PCC administration to take our bargaining platform seriously and work with us to ratify our contract.

Unions around Oregon deal with that same strategy. Bosses simply ignore contract bargaining for as long as possible, hoping that uncertainty will break union solidarity. Providence Healthcare and New Seasons Marketplace management are also ugly examples of bad faith bargaining meant to stymie workers organizing for living wages, dependable benefits, and humane working conditions.

Ending this exclusion of UI benefits for strikes that go over 7 days will help make sure that workers like me can continue to pay our rent, feed our families, afford prescription drugs or pay our COBRA health care payments while out on strike. This will mean that we aren't forced into an unsafe or unfair contract just because the employer can starve us out. And those UI payments will work as intended: to also put money back into the local economy at times of economic distress.

Strikes are always a measure of absolute last resort. Please help ensure that workers like me – nurses, teachers, grocery and construction workers and so many more – are not forced into unsafe or unfair contracts simply because we can't afford to exercise our legally protected right to strike. Please vote yes on SB 916.