

02/06/2025

RE: [SB 916](#)

Please accept my testimony on this bill. I am requesting you vote “no” on this bill.

I am a small business owner, and from what I understand, this bill could potentially up my unemployment insurance rates. Right now, I employ 4 people, but I could easily cut that down to 3 if I needed to. If this indeed does make my costs go up, this would mean that I would need to get rid of one employee. I don't want to make this decision, but I also am a small business struggling just to survive in this economy.

Even if my unemployment insurance rates don't go up, I don't understand the need for this measure. According to Federal website on unemployment <https://www.usa.gov/unemployment-benefits>

“Unemployment insurance pays you money if you lose your job **through no fault of your own.**”

Unemployment is when you lose a job due to “no fault of your own”. Choosing to strike is not “no fault”. People make a decision to strike (meaning they are not forced to strike). If an employee quits their job, I don't have to pay unemployment because it was the employee's decision to quit their job. Likewise, the unemployment insurance system should not have to pay someone when they CHOOSE to strike. It is “opting in”. A choice. Not “no fault”.

Part of what makes a decision to strike difficult is going “without pay”. If they are being paid to strike, the decision, in my opinion, will have less meaning. I think it puts them in a far weaker bargaining position because there is no hardship anymore. On the other side, the employees will be more willing to hold out longer when they are getting paid. It will make it harder for both sides to come to an agreement when there is no hardship for one side.

For me personally, without the hardship part, I will not be emotionally supportive of the striking workers. For instance, Fred Meyer workers recently protested. I felt for those workers, and I did not want to shop at Fred Meyer during the strike. If I knew the workers were getting paid while on strike, I would have no problem crossing the picket line to shop at Fred Meyer. I would see the strike as a way for the worker to take a day off and get paid for it, and the strike dragged on, I would feel less sympathetic as I know there is no hardship for them.

Which is another repercussion. Would we see more people striking because it is a way to get paid not to go to work? Would strikes last longer because there is no need for the employees to come to a deal since they are not out of income?

This is also unfair to other non-union workers. For instance, if my employee wants to take a leave of absence because they want to go protest for some cause, they won't get paid. This gives an unfair advantage to unions by paying employees to protest simply because they belong to a union. Every other non-union worker out there doesn't have luxury of being able to take off work to protest something and get paid. For instance, many people took a day off of work to protest for Black Lives Matter. They didn't get paid to protest. They made the sacrifice. This bill would make it unfair to anyone not in a union.

And again, it feels like less of a sacrifice if they get paid which destroys the message they are trying to get across.

I feel like the point of the union is to support the workers during this time. It should not be on the state unemployment system. Unions should pay the workers unemployment for striking. That should not be the role of the state.

This bill is wrong on so many levels. It will hurt small businesses with higher tax rates, which will in turn, create less new jobs, and could cause a loss of jobs. It creates less sympathy for those workers who protest and could cause strikes to be prolonged when there is no urgency for workers to get back to work if they are getting paid. Lastly, it creates an unfair advantage for union workers over other non-union workers who also pay into the same unemployment system. This should not be something for the state to fund. Let unions fund this themselves. That is what they collect dues for.

I urge you to vote no on this bill.

Thank you for your time and dedication to our great state.

Sincerely,

Shannen Knight  
Small Business Owner  
A Sight for Sport Eyes  
West Linn, OR