

Submitter: Kyra Sherrin  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: Senate Committee On Labor and Business  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB916

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 Kyra Sherrin, LCSW and I have been treating Oregonians experiencing an acute psychiatric crisis at Unity Center for Behavioral Health in the Psychiatric Emergency Services (PES) since September 2017. I am also an ONA member and a member of the bargaining team that represents 120+ clinicians and healthcare workers at Unity. In the past, I have seen first hand the profoundly positive impacts of collective bargaining that did not require a strike has had in different sectors and the ways in which a strong well built contract protects both the workers and employers.

However, participating in collective bargaining within the healthcare industrial complex in Oregon has been a stark wake up call to the realities of the present day labor movement.

Senior Leadership and middle management at Unity spent nearly 2 months strategizing and planning for a strike they, for unknown reasons, believed to be planned for the last week of January 2025. A strike that in actuality was a figment of their imagination. Instead of coming to the bargaining tables prepared with actionable proposals and ready to engage in good faith bargaining to work toward a fair contract with their two bargaining units in negotiations, they spent countless resources preparing for a strike that they falsely believed would span nearly every department in the hospital. A strike that would have an unimaginable negative impact on Oregon's most vulnerable and at risk populations. They did absolutely nothing to avoid a strike, even if it was a false belief.

Contrary to Legacy's belief in this instance and Providence's repeated misrepresentations in the media recently, no one wants to strike. Striking is never the hope or dream of members or labor organizers. It is a last ditch effort to mitigate the imbalance of power when pushing for improved patient and worker safety, benefits, safe staffing, and decreased violence in the workplace. However, in recent history with the imbedding of high priced anti-labor lawyers at each bargaining table, forcing a strike has become a tool for management to wield, making it nearly impossible for labor movements avoid accepting weaker contracts and weaker protections simply because the corporation is well resourced and knows they can outlast the workers with ease.

Allowing for unemployment benefits to support striking workers simply levels the

playing field and provides a safety net to workers whose families can not financially survive the fight for improved working conditions, a fight that benefits all Oregonians no matter the sector they work in. Without this support, it seems likely that the idea of 'good faith bargaining' will lose all meaning and power as corporations will simply wait out the little guys.

I've only lived in Oregon for a little over a decade now, but supporting workers right and fighting corporate greed sounds very on brand for Oregon and I think the vast majority of your constituents would agree with me.

Thank you for your time and consideration,  
Kyra Sherrin, LCSW