

I live in your district and am writing to you today in support of SB 916 and HB 3434, which would repeal the law blocking unemployment benefits to workers currently on strike.

Nursing is not an easy job. To remain in this profession, you have to be strong and dedicated to your profession. As a nurse, I have dedicated my career to providing care and advocating for the well-being of patients. However, ensuring quality patient care is not just an individual responsibility-it is dependent on fair working conditions, adequate staffing, and the ability of healthcare workers to advocate for themselves and their patients without fear of financial devastation. Strikes and labor disputes are not decisions taken lightly, especially in healthcare, where patient safety is our top priority.

I support this policy because when nurses and other healthcare workers engage in labor actions, it is often in response to unsafe staffing ratios, lack of resources, and unfair labor practices that compromise the quality of care we can provide. The right to stand up for safe working conditions should not come with the penalty of financial ruin. Unemployment insurance is a social safety net that should be available to workers in their time of need.

By denying unemployment benefits to workers engaged in a labor dispute, we are effectively punishing individuals who are fighting to improve workplace conditions. If forced into an indefinite labor dispute without any financial support, many will be unable to afford housing, food, or childcare, making it nearly impossible to stand up for necessary changes in the workplace. This creates an unfair advantage for employers, discouraging workers from using their legal right to collective action.

Employers and workers are not on the same playing field - employers are paid throughout a strike and can often starve workers like myself out. This tactic is used to have us accept sub-par agreements, and extend strikes. SB 916 and HB 3434 have the power to change that.

Moreover, allowing unemployment benefits in these situations acknowledges the reality that labor disputes do not just affect employees -they impact entire communities. When healthcare workers are forced to accept unsafe conditions due to financial coercion, patient care suffers. Protecting workers' rights to advocate for themselves ultimately protects patients by ensuring that nurses can fight for the resources they need to provide safe and effective care.

I ask you to strongly consider supporting SB 916 and HB 3434 to ensure that workers, including healthcare professionals like myself, are not placed in an impossible position when advocating for better working conditions.