

Testimony on SB916

Dear Members of the Committee,

My name is Karen Chirre, and I am a small business owner in downtown Portland. I am writing to express my opposition to SB916, which proposes that individuals who are off work due to a strike be guaranteed unemployment benefits.

While I understand the intention behind this legislation—to provide support for workers during challenging times—I must emphasize the significant financial burden it would impose on both small and large businesses. As a small business owner, I operate on thin margins and face constant challenges related to rising costs. The responsibility of funding unemployment benefits for striking workers would create additional strain on our resources, potentially jeopardizing our ability to maintain employment for our current staff.

For small businesses like mine, this legislation could lead to difficult choices, such as layoffs, reduced hiring, or even business closures. We are often unable to absorb unexpected costs without making sacrifices that could harm our employees.

On the other hand, large businesses may also feel the impact, albeit in different ways. While they may have more financial leeway, the increased costs associated with unemployment benefits for striking workers could lead to higher prices for consumers, reduced investment in growth, or even shifts in hiring practices. This could further contribute to an uneven playing field where small businesses struggle to compete.

In a competitive market, both small and large businesses are vital to our economy, providing jobs and contributing to community stability. However, policies that increase operational costs without considering the unique challenges faced by businesses of all sizes can lead to unintended consequences that ultimately harm the very workers we aim to support.

I urge the committee to carefully consider the impact of this legislation on both small and large businesses, as well as the broader economic landscape in Oregon. It is crucial that we seek solutions that support workers while ensuring that businesses can continue to thrive and provide employment.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Karen Chirre