

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

Testimony to the Senate Committee on Labor and Business  
Supporting SB 916  
Susan King MS, RN

Members of the Committee:

I support SB 916 which would provide unemployment benefits to workers who have made the difficult choice to engage in a strike. I am a staff nurse in a Providence facility and have been on strike since January 10.

In my career, there have been very few nursing strikes in Oregon or even across the country. No nurse wants to be outside her or his practice setting while patients are inside. The decision to vote yes to strike is a difficult one that is made after efforts to secure a contract which supports practice, provides market compensation and addresses benefits have failed.

In the case of the current strike at Providence, over a year of negotiation has resulted in little movement toward a fair agreement despite my organization's repeated proposals. It has been in the employer's financial interest to stall, offer little and generally reject the concerns of the very providers who are the reason that the employer exists. Care for our patients and our community.

I am well aware that many see a strike as a voluntary action by employees. While that is true, the decision, in my experience in nursing, has come after the process governed by the National Labor Relation Act has failed and there seem to be only two options. One is to accept an offer by the employer that is substandard, fails to address clinical practice concerns, fails to put patients first and likely results in a decrease in retention of nurses. Second is to withdraw services from the employer. That is, sadly, what has happened over the last year at Providence.

I urge your support.