

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

My name is Terrie. I'm a Registered Nurse and a member of Oregon Nurses Association union. I support SB 916 which would repeal the law blocking unemployment benefits to workers on strike. This bill would help ensure that workers are able to stay afloat while fighting for a fair contract.

Workers are often up against big corporations that potentially have up to millions (or even billions) in their budget to knock down the individual workers who are simply fighting for better working conditions and fair pay. If there is no safeguard for striking workers, there is an unfair disadvantage for workers at the bargaining table. There can be no "fair bargaining" if one side (corporations) have unlimited resources to "wait out" the other side (workers), rather than "bargaining in good faith".

This is currently happening during our healthcare workers' strike against Providence Health & Services Oregon Region. Providence counts on striking workers to run out of money to pay basic bills (mortgage/rent, utility bills, etc). This then forces striking workers to return to work for wages and thus loses us power at the bargaining table. I would like this to never happen to other groups of union workers in the future.

Ending this exclusion of UI benefits for strikes that go over 7 days will help make sure that workers like me can continue to pay our rent, feed our families, afford prescription drugs or pay our COBRA health care payments while out on strike. This will mean that we aren't forced into an unsafe or unfair contract just because the employer can starve us out. And those UI payments will work as intended: to also put money back into the local economy at times of economic distress.

Strikes are always a measure of absolute last resort. Please help ensure that workers like me – nurses, teachers, grocery and construction workers and so many more – are not forced into unsafe or unfair contracts simply because we can't afford to exercise our legally protected right to strike. Please vote yes on SB 916.

Sincerely,  
Terrie Ko, BSN, RN, CNOR