

Submitter: Jane Drake  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: Senate Committee On Labor and Business  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB916  
Jane Drake, RN, ONA Member

Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Jane Drake, and I am a registered nurse and a proud member of the Oregon Nurses Association. I strongly support SB 916, which would repeal the law that prevents workers on strike from accessing unemployment benefits. This bill is essential to ensuring that workers can stay afloat while advocating for fair wages, safe working conditions, and adequate benefits.

My husband and I are both nurses employed by Providence, and we are currently on strike. The financial burden of this strike has been overwhelming for us. In August 2024, we relocated from Bend to work at Providence, only to be shocked by the poor quality of our health insurance. In Bend, I paid \$50 for a 90-day supply of my mental health medications. At Providence, that same prescription now costs me \$1,300 out of pocket. Additionally, I have another medication that has increased to \$600 per month. These exorbitant costs are just one of the many reasons I am on the strike line—fighting for fair pay and affordable healthcare.

My husband and I are hardworking, tax-paying citizens. We have always contributed to our community and supported others in need. Now, for the first time in our lives, we are asking for help. Unemployment benefits should be there for workers in times of financial hardship—including those exercising their legally protected right to strike.

Eliminating the exclusion of UI benefits for strikes lasting more than seven days will ensure that workers like me can continue to pay rent, feed our families, afford life-saving medications, and maintain our healthcare coverage through COBRA while we stand up for our rights. It will prevent employers from using financial hardship to force workers into unfair or unsafe contracts. Additionally, these unemployment benefits will serve their intended purpose—helping to stabilize local economies during times of economic distress.

Strikes are always a last resort. No worker wants to walk off the job, but sometimes, it is the only option left. Please support SB 916 to ensure that nurses, teachers, grocery workers, construction workers, and so many others are not forced into accepting unjust conditions simply because they cannot afford to fight back.

I urge you to vote YES on SB 916.

Thank you for your time and consideration.