

Submitter: Matt Holmes

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Labor and Business

Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB916

My name is Matt Holmes and I'm a nurse at Providence Memorial Hospital in Hood River and a member of the ONA 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.

Many nurses were unable to strike because of the cost and especially the potential loss of insurance. The cost of a strike is exponentially larger on the employees of lower paying jobs. It is such an unfair burden that employees must overcome to ensure fair contracts. Many Oregonians are unable to fight back against increasingly greedy employers today.

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.