

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

My name is Alisa Valles and I'm an RN and a member of OFNHP Local 5017 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.

Share your experience on (any of all of the below):

The last time there was a strike in the Northwest at Kaiser Permanente, workers were on the line for 7 weeks. Our contracts are up for negotiation in October of 2025. As current events foretell, we will need every worker to be able to strike and hold the line for whatever amount of time it takes. Unemployment insurance would ensure that workers are able to hold the line and continue to fight for what is right for our patients (which also includes the workers and their families because we all have insurance through our employer) a powerful and true to character ability that promotes fighting for what is right rather than being silenced by the system of surviving.

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.

Thank you,
Alisa Valles, RN