

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

RE: Support for SB 916

To the Senate Committee On Labor and Business,

I am a RN that has worked for Providence St Vincent medical center for the past 15 years. I joined my colleagues on the strike line on January 10th when we began our strike against Providence. Providence St Vincent Medical Center treats patients with many different complex medical conditions, each requiring a high level of expertise and knowledge in order to manage. We are frequently expected to manage patients with these conditions without the assistance of enough personnel to do so safely and efficiently. Working in these conditions is intolerable and it is causing high turnover of nurses and unsafe working environments for people who went into a field to care for the most vulnerable people in their communities.

Going on strike was necessary as we have worked with an expired contract for more than a year at Providence St Vincent. Our bargaining team has worked tirelessly for more than a year trying to negotiate with Providence regarding patient safety, wages, health benefits and more. Providence repeatedly refused to bargain in good faith by not making meaningful compromises and stonewalling our bargaining reps.

We went on strike to keep our communities safe. It has been heart-wrenching to watch Providence put patients at risk by replacing highly trained staff with people who have an unknown amount of training in things like LVADs and post heart transplant care. These patients come to St. Vincent specifically to access care from nurses and doctors with specialized training, most of which are outside on the picket lines. Our patients are at even greater risk now and Providence continues to refuse to make meaningful movement in negotiations.

We have done this at great sacrifice to ourselves and our families and we need the support of our government to allow us to hold Providence accountable while still being able to pay our very basic bills in the process.

It is necessary to have a bill that would allow striking workers to apply for unemployment benefits once a strike lasts longer than 7 days. Providence refused to bargain with ONA for the 10 days prior to the strike and did not return to in person bargaining until day 19 of the strike. Once bargaining did resume, Providence continued to refuse to make any meaningful movement with the RNs contracts. They

are taking advantage of the fact that their employees don't make millions of dollars every year and need every pay check to pay for basic necessities like food and housing.

Several of my co-workers crossed the picket line because they could not financially sustain without their paychecks. Morally they wanted to be on the strike line with their team but because of their finances they were unable to. That is a shame. If they would have had access to unemployment they would be out on the strike line with their team fighting for the safe and fair workplace that they deserve.

Please be a part of this movement to create more equality between employers and employees. Providence cannot run its hospital without the thousands of people they employ. This will allow laborers across the state to not fear that they will lose everything when they simply want to assert their right to a safe and fair workplace.

Thank you for your time.
Heather RN