

Submitter: Isabel Olson

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Labor and Business

Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB916

When a strike is called during a labor dispute, it is because the situation truly demands it - the situation on the job and the contract offered are unlivable, and the employer refuses to change. And yet, the most poorly-treated workers are those least able to strike, because their jobs pay them so little that they cannot afford to miss even a day's work. When workers do go on strike, employers try to starve them out - betting that they the employers have far more money to lose than the workers they underpay, and that if they spend far more money on scabs than they would have on fair pay then they can spitefully ensure that the workers never, ever get a livable wage.

Qualifying otherwise eligible striking workers for unemployment would be an enormous boon to these most underpaid workers. It would allow them the ability to stand up for their rights without fearing they will lose their homes. It would make employers more willing to negotiate fair terms to begin with, knowing that if workers strike they will not starve.

It is not, after all, as though striking workers have wilfully abandoned their jobs. When workers strike, their jobs have abandoned them - their jobs have overworked and underpaid them, have denied them the sick leave and safety standards that any reasonable person would say they are due, have refused to treat them like human beings with dignity, and have refused to change in contract negotiations. Their employers can end the strike at any time, simply by returning to the table and negotiating fair terms. Striking workers want to return to work. They want to return to the livable job and livable wage that their employers are wilfully withholding from them.

Please pass SB 916. It will be a critically important bill for labor rights in the state of Oregon.