

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

I am testifying in support of Senate Bill 916, which would end the exclusion of Unemployment Insurance benefits for workers when they are on strike.

We are living through the darkest time our country has experienced in 100 years. We can expect cruelty and harm from the federal government, what we cannot expect is any support of workers. Oregon will have to fly with her own wings, and stand alone in supporting workers. Removing the threat of destitution and losing health care that employers such as Providence hold over workers, realigns the power balance. It is still David versus Goliath but you're giving David the slingshot. Every major corporation is looking to see what it can get away with, how much it can squeeze its workers before it kills them.

You have the opportunity to protect Oregon workers, their families and the people they serve such as patients in medical facilities. These corporations have shown that they do not care about moms giving birth to babies or grandads getting a hip replacement, they would let us all suffer if it means more profit, and the only people protecting us are our health care workers. The recent Providence strike has demonstrated that private equity has no moral limits, please support the hardworking healthcare workers who actually do care about you and your families.

Strikes don't happen overnight. They are the result of long, difficult negotiations, and they are always the last resort. Many workers remain on the job under expired contracts for years, choosing to keep workplaces running rather than striking. But when an employer refuses to negotiate fairly, a strike becomes necessary.

Right now, employers can strip healthcare benefits away from striking workers. That is an enormous burden on working families. SB 916 is a small but vital protection that would ensure striking workers can still put food on the table and afford basic expenses.

This policy has minimal costs and will not place a significant burden on the unemployment insurance system. Instead, it will lead to shorter, fairer strikes by ensuring employers can't simply wait workers out.

Oregon must pass SB 916 and make the bargaining process more balanced.