

Submitter: Nathaniel Hudson Hartman  
On Behalf Of: Drivers Union OR  
Committee: Senate Committee On Labor and Business  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB916

Chair Taylor, Vice Chair Bonham and members of the committee,

My name is Nathaniel Hudson-Hartman from Drivers Union OR, and I speak on behalf of Rideshare drivers in Oregon, but support fairness and equity for all workers!

I am strongly for SB 916; the law blocking unemployment benefits to workers on strike. Workers deserve help while fighting for Fair contracts, especially given the fact that many times these contracts are months (if not years) expired, with companies often times engaging in unfair labour practices.

The new corporate capture status quo is taking the form of refusing to increase pay to keep up with cost of living, not ensuring workers' safety concerns are addressed, and prioritizing profits over people, especially when it comes to benefits. This is particularly true in the case of educators and healthcare workers, when the quality of students education and patient care become consequentially affected in negative ways.

Strikes are never taken lightly, and if you ask any rank-and-file worker, they would certainly be at work, bit freezing their bits off out in the elements, particularly as our harsh and unpredictable winters set it. In order to strike, workers take a "strike vote" to ensure that all workers are in support due to the immense sacrifices involved. If you ask workers about going on strike, many would say that their hands were forced by employers. Employers who refused to negotiate for years, rolled back benefits, froze wages, or did not address safety concerns.

We know that there is a power imbalance in this country between employers and workers - a gap that has only grown wider. Companies are making record profits while wages stay stagnant or unable to keep up with inflation. While employers are paid throughout bargaining and can often "starve out" employees, workers are forced to make increasingly difficult choices.

UI was intended to serve exactly these types of situations. The unemployment insurance system was established in 1935 to safeguard workers and families against an unexpected loss of income due to unemployment and to support the overall economy during economic downturns. The system was also intended to prevent jobless workers from having to accept employment that is unsafe, unsuitable, or a poor match for their skills and abilities, which would drive down wages and depress labor standards for workers across the board.

Like other workers served by the UI system, striking workers are not receiving paychecks and are disconnected from their employers, at least temporarily. Striking workers may expect to return to work for the same employer, as do many other categories of workers who are currently eligible for UI benefits in most states, such as seasonal workers, workers on temporary layoff, and workers in Short Time Compensation programs.

Please, if you truly care about our front-line workers, then you will vote YES on SB 916! Show your support for workers that are fighting a fight they would've rather not had to, but were forced by their employees to! Let's help re-balance the scales, and send a strong message that all workers can fight for their rights without fear of not being able to support themselves and their families!

In Unity,  
Nathaniel E. Hudson-Hartman  
Drivers Union OR