

Submitter: Susan Winkelman

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Labor and Business

Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB916

To the Senators and Representatives sponsoring and supporting this very important bill, SB 916,

Thank you very much for addressing this critical need for the working men and women of Oregon. I am a registered nurse working for Providence hospitals. Currently I, along with almost 5,000 other nurses employed by Providence and represented by Oregon Nurses Association (ONA) are on strike for safer staffing, better benefits, and wages that compare to other hospital systems in Oregon. The nurses of Providence do not take striking casually. They care deeply for their patients and the staff they work with, but the need for improved contracts is critical. This strike has created financial distress for many of the nurses on the picket lines. Many are single income earners, some with children, some caring for other family members, new graduates with student loans, those with very large medical bills to pay, and those with partners or spouses that are not able to work. The hardships created are very diverse. These nurses are so dedicated to improved conditions that they are willing to make these sacrifices.

But the reality is, Providence has the finances to 'wait' out the nurses, putting them into greater financial hardship and trying to force them to accept a contract that does not address the issues most important to them. This bill would help to ease the financial burden for these workers. It will allow them to continue to work for a contract that protects the patients (safe staffing), provide decent benefits for their families, gives them the prevailing wages for this area, and allows reasonable time off for illnesses or family vacations.

The unemployment benefits will not be full wages, and these workers understand that. But it will help them pay the mortgage, buy the groceries, pay for gas, and make student loan payments. It. Will. Help. and that is what these striking workers need, a little bit of help.

SB 916 can help those of us in the middle of this strike right now, but more importantly, it will help ANY laborer involved in a strike while they are working towards fair contracts. This is a good bill. I hope to see it enacted to before my colleagues are unable to wait out Providence. And I hope, for all the other laborers who may end up in disputes, that it will be there to help them too.

Thank you for hearing my testimony