

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

I work for the Oregon Department of Consumer and Business Services and am a proud member of SEIU 503, local 440. Many of my colleagues live paycheck to paycheck like so many other Oregonians. Housing costs are exorbitant and food prices are surging ever higher. While workers have the power to withhold their labor when necessary to fight for the wages, benefits, and working conditions they need to ensure a stable and dignified life for them and their families, financial insecurity prevents so many from meaningfully exercising it. Big business can literally starve workers by waiting them out, as the loss of even a week's worth of wages could cost someone their home. This creates a power imbalance and disincentivizes employers from offering meaningful concessions.

In the past few months, I've been on picket lines with workers from Starbucks, New Seasons, and Providence. I've spoken with courageous workers who found the will and capacity to organize and strike despite having no savings and no safety net. No one should be in that position and we have the chance to do better by them. Allowing striking workers to collect unemployment insurance will keep them warm, fed, and housed, which is both humane and in our community's best interest.

The decision to go on strike is never made frivolously or lightly. It comes with significant risks and sacrifices. This bill won't change that. It'll merely make progress towards alleviating the gross power discrepancy that exists between workers and employers, and provide a measure of security to the workers we all rely upon.