

Submitter: Amanda Miles  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: Senate Committee On Labor and Business  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB916  
February 5, 2025

To the Honorable Representatives and Senators of the Oregon State Legislature:

I am writing to express my earnest support for and recommendation of the expedited passage of Oregon House Bill 3434/Senate Bill 916. This bill proposes to amend a state law that denies unemployment benefits to persons who are involved in an active labor dispute with their employer.

As you may know, several thousand nurses, physicians and other healthcare providers are currently engaged in such a labor dispute with Providence Health & Services of Oregon, which is one of the largest employers in the state of Oregon. As of the date of this letter, most of these workers – who provide critically important care to the people of this state at Providence’s eight Oregon hospitals – have been on strike for 27 days.

Providence management refused to bargain with the members of any of these Oregon Nurses Association-represented bargaining units during the mandatory 10-day notification period leading up to the strike, which guaranteed that a work stoppage would commence. And since the strike began on January 10, 2025, Providence management has engaged in disappointingly insignificant amounts of movement in bargaining to try to reach a satisfactory resolution. A vote on tentative agreements will take place over the next few days, but it appears quite possible that the strike may last for a number of days or weeks longer as the fight for a fair contract continues. Meanwhile, Providence is spending tens of millions of dollars per week to pay strike replacement workers at rates much greater than it pays its own employees while also telling the press that the union’s proposals are “not financially sustainable.”

This dispute has caused a great deal of mental, physical, moral and financial distress for the healthcare workers out on the strike lines. Our reasonable requests include improvements to compensation, healthcare and time-off benefits, and safe staffing contract language comparable to that at other area hospitals. Competitive contracts would help to recruit and retain healthcare workers at these Providence facilities. These agreements would benefit worker safety while on the job. Above all, they would help the healthcare workers achieve our highest priority: providing for the well-

being and safety of our patients – the people of Oregon.

Given that Providence seems unwilling to bargain in good faith, some measure of relief as granted through this bill would be immensely beneficial to these healthcare workers. It would allow for us to be able to care for our basic needs – housing, utilities, food, childcare and our own healthcare – during this work stoppage. To be clear, we strongly prefer to be at the bedside caring for our patients. We anxiously await resolution to this dispute in the form of a fair contract. But we believe so strongly in trying to improve our working conditions and advocating for our patients that we are speaking out against an organization as large and powerful as Providence. Financial relief via unemployment funds would help ensure that the voices of workers in this state are being heard and that Oregon employers must bargain in good faith instead of waiting for their employees to become so crippled financially that those employees have little choice aside from subpar contracts and working conditions.

I urge the members of the Oregon State House and Senate to expeditiously pass these bills and to extend unemployment benefits to workers involved in active labor disputes. I thank you for your time and consideration, and for your care for the people of Oregon.

Sincerely,

Amanda Miles, MA, BSN, RN, CNOR