

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

Testimony SB 916

My name is April Milan, and I am a physical therapist and a proud member of OFNHP 5017 union. I fully support SB 916, a bill that would repeal the law that currently blocks unemployment benefits for workers on strike. This bill is essential to help workers like me stay afloat while we fight for a fair contract.

As a union healthcare worker, I faced the pressure of a potential strike when my employer proposed an unfair contract. The contract offered a pay scale that was 30% lower than the community standard and much lower than the wages of existing employees. Our union stood in solidarity to ensure that healthcare workers in our community are paid fair wages, allowing us to live here, support our families, and save for our futures.

If we had gone on an extended strike, clinicians like myself would have been forced to choose between feeding our families and standing in solidarity to ensure our patients receive healthcare services driven by clinicians with medical degrees and years of expertise rather than by the financial priorities of executives. No worker should have to make this sort of choice.

Ending the exclusion of unemployment benefits for strikes lasting more than seven days would provide the crucial financial support that workers like me need. It would allow us to continue paying our rent, feeding our families, affording prescription drugs, and covering COBRA healthcare payments while on the strike line. This support would prevent us from being forced into unsafe or unfair contracts simply because our employers are able to starve us out. Furthermore, these unemployment benefits would do what they are meant to do: put money back into the local economy during times of economic distress.

Strikes are always a last resort. No one wants to strike, but when it becomes necessary, we should have the financial security to stand firm for the fair treatment we deserve. Workers like me—physical therapists, teachers, grocery workers, construction workers, and so many more—should not be forced into accepting unsafe or unjust contracts just because we can't afford to exercise our legally protected right to strike.

Please support us by voting YES on SB 916. It's time to give workers the dignity and support we deserve.