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February 6th, 2025

Senate Committee on Labor and Business
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

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

On behalf of the Professional and Technical Employees, Local 17 (PROTEC17), I write today in support of SB 916. PROTEC17 represents approximately 10,000 public sector employees across the Pacific Northwest, including over 1,000 engineers, planners, information technology specialists, and technicians employed by the City of Portland.

We strongly encourage your support of SB 916, repealing the law blocking unemployment benefits to workers on strike. This will help ensure that workers are able to support themselves and their families while fighting for a fair contract.

Strikes are a powerful tool for workers, but the decision to engage in this tactic is never taken lightly. Strikes follow lengthy negotiations in which an employer and union tried to reach a deal. However, because of the power imbalance between workers and employers, employers too often drag out negotiations, coming to the table only fulfill their obligation to appear to bargain without taking the concerns of their workers seriously. PROTEC17 members have experienced this kind of negotiating tactic by employers, and it is often accompanied by the assumption that an employer can simply wait out employees through the bargaining process, and then rely on economic pressures on employees to prevent a strike.

By providing partial wage replacement through unemployment insurance, SB 916 would address this uneven playing field. It would assure that workers have a real chance to negotiate with employers who otherwise would simply wait out their employees. It will keep families afloat during one of the most difficult financial situations they can face, and would keep money flowing into local communities during rare strikes.

Thank you for your consideration, and we respectfully ask that you join PROTEC17 members in supporting of SB 916.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Elliot Levin".

Elliot Levin
Research Director and Oregon Legislative Advocate