

Submitter: Breanna Zabel RN
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Labor and Business
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB916
RE: Support for SB 916

Dear Chair and Members of the Senate Committee on Labor and Business,

My name is Breanna Zabel, and I am a registered nurse at Providence Medford Medical Center, where I serve as a staffing committee co-chair, union steward, and frontline patient advocate. I am writing in strong support of Senate Bill 916 and House Bill 3434, which would grant striking workers access to unemployment benefits after seven days.

Workers do not take the decision to strike lightly—it is always a last resort, a desperate measure to demand safer conditions, fair wages, and the ability to provide quality care for our patients. Striking is an enormous personal and financial sacrifice, one that healthcare workers take on not just for ourselves, but for the communities we serve. However, the financial hardship of a strike can be devastating. The loss of income places an unbearable strain on workers and their families, making it even harder to stand up for necessary changes in our workplaces.

Employers know this and use it as leverage, relying on the fear of financial ruin to keep workers from demanding what is fair. If striking workers had access to unemployment benefits, it would help level the playing field in negotiations. It would mean that hospital executives couldn't simply wait us out while we struggle to pay rent and put food on the table. It would mean that healthcare workers could stand firm in our fight for better staffing, safer working conditions, and the sustainability of Oregon's healthcare system—without the added burden of financial desperation.

Healthcare workers do not strike for selfish reasons. We strike because we are exhausted, burned out, and being asked to work in conditions that put our patients at risk. We strike because the healthcare system is failing both workers and patients, and we need real change. This bill would provide a safety net that ensures workers can continue to advocate for necessary improvements without being forced into financial ruin.

I urge you to support SB 916 and HB 3434. Oregon must stand with its workers—because when workers win, our communities win.

Sincerely,
Breanna Zabel RN