

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

Dear Members of the Senate Committee on Labor and Business,

I am writing to express my strong support for Senate Bill 916 / House Bill 3434, which would provide unemployment benefits to striking workers after seven days. As an RN at Portland Providence, my husband and I know firsthand the immense financial strain that families endure, especially when making the difficult decision to strike for fair wages and working conditions.

My husband is a researcher studying Multiple Sclerosis, a field that is critical to advancing medical knowledge and improving lives. Meanwhile, our son is in daycare, and like so many working families, we live paycheck to paycheck. Between daycare costs and student loan payments, we carefully budget every dollar. When we made the difficult decision to prepare for a potential strike, we started cutting back on everything—capping Hanukkah presents at \$25 and adopting a vegetarian diet to save on groceries. Still, we are forced to dip into our savings just to stay afloat.

I never wanted to strike. None of us did. But we had no option because Providence failed to bargain in good faith for months. It was only recently when Governor Kotek stepped in and demanded an end to the strike, that Providence finally came to the table. Striking is never a first choice—it is the last resort when all other avenues have failed. Workers should not be punished for standing up for safe staffing, fair wages, and the ability to provide quality patient care.

Workers do not go on strike lightly. It is a last resort when employers refuse to listen to our concerns about patient safety, fair wages, and reasonable working conditions. The choice to strike is not made out of selfishness but out of necessity—for our families, our patients, and the integrity of our professions. The financial burden of striking should not fall squarely on the shoulders of workers and their families alone. The state is responsible for ensuring that workers who take this courageous stand are not left in financial ruin.

If striking workers were eligible for unemployment benefits, it would provide a critical safety net that allows us to advocate for the changes that benefit not only ourselves but the broader community. It would level the playing field in negotiations, ensuring that employers cannot simply outlast workers by waiting for them to run out of money. Instead, it would allow workers to stand firm in advocating for the fair conditions we

all deserve.

I urge you to support SB 916 / HB 3434 and stand with Oregon's workers. We should not have to choose between fighting for what is right and ensuring our families' financial stability. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Julia Mendelson  
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