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# A STRONG VOICE FOR OREGON'S WORKERS

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**TO:** Chair Taylor  
Vice-Chair Bonham  
Members of the Senate Committee on Labor and Business

**FR:** Graham Trainor, OR AFL-CIO President

**RE:** *Testimony in Support of SB 916, UI for Striking Workers*

February 6, 2025

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

My name is Graham Trainor and I'm proud to serve as President of the Oregon AFL-CIO, the statewide federation of labor unions representing over 300,000 working people in Oregon and a voice for all workers in the legislative process.

I am honored to be here with some incredible members and leaders this morning in support of SB 916 which would repeal the law blocking unemployment benefits for workers on strike. This bill would help ensure that workers are able to stay afloat while fighting for a fair contract.

The first thing I want to make clear: if you were to ask a worker on strike whether or not they want to be there – whether they love being out on a picket line in the January cold and rain instead of serving patients in a hospital, teaching kids in a classroom, doing construction work to make our cities run – and they would tell you no.

Union members are professionals who are dedicated to their craft no matter their sector. You might hear later today that these strikes are voluntary and that workers are simply making a choice. But to call a strike voluntary and to treat workers on strike as if they are getting a break from work is an insult to the thousands of Oregon workers who've fought hard - and will continue to fight hard – to have a meaningful and powerful voice on the job through collective action and union representation.

Strike votes are taken after months of negotiations and are the ultimate democratic process. And far too often, we see that workers' hands are forced by their employer when making the difficult decision to go on strike. And sadly we shouldn't be surprised by that given what's happening in the broader economy: on average CEOs make 272 times more than their employees. C-suites are clocking in record profits all while saying that they simply can't afford to pay workers a living wage, to cover their healthcare or invest in their employees' retirement security.

This is unacceptable and it's ultimately hurting our communities and economy. SB 916 simply and modestly levels the playing field a notch by helping make sure that workers are not starved into a contract that perpetuates the ills of our society at large: corporate greed, unsafe work, and a culture where we are not respecting employees for the work that ultimately makes our society run.

This culture is not the Oregon way. We have an opportunity with this policy to show workers that the Oregon legislature has their backs. That legislators can help small businesses thrive *and* help workers survive when they are taking a stand for the betterment of themselves and their community. And make sure we are the first on the West coast to stand strong in our values as Oregonians: That we believe that workers should have a fair chance in negotiations, that they should be able to pay their bills, afford housing and healthcare, retire with dignity, and ultimately be treated with the respect that these professional workers deserve.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify and we strongly and proudly urge you to move this bill forward in the process.