

Submitter: Katie Whitney Luers RN
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Labor and Business
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB916

RE: Support for SB 916

To the Senate Committee On Labor and Business,

I am writing in support of SB 916 extending unemployment benefits to striking workers in Oregon.

I have been a registered nurse at Providence Portland Medical Center for 9 years and on strike for the last 29 days. I love my job, and my heart aches to think my patients are suffering without the quality care we provide. But truthfully, it has become harder and harder to provide that quality care. Because Providence pays less than other area hospitals, offers us high deductible health insurance, and does not comply with Oregon's safe staffing law, quality nurses go elsewhere, or complete their training at Providence and then find greener pastures. The number of patients I have to care for has actually increased since implementation of HB 2697 guaranteeing safe staffing. I continue to strike to advocate for my patients and get them the care they deserve.

But 29 days without pay comes at a steep cost to me and my family. I am the primary earner in my family, and am supporting a child in college. Discussions on the line often center around how long my colleagues can hold out. This strike costs Providence far more than what we are asking for in fair compensation and staffing guarantees. But they are a giant corporation with deep pockets. They have refused to bargain in good faith. Providence doesn't mind trying to starve us into submission.

This financial imbalance gives employers the advantage in labor negotiations. I urge you to support SB 916 and level the playing field so we can continue to fight.
Katie Whitney Luers RN