

Submitter: Emily 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 have been a nurse for nearly a decade and my specialty is in Oncology. I work in a rural outpatient oncology clinic in Hood River Oregon at Providence Hood River Memorial. I absolutely love my job and the patients that I serve. Our clinic is small but mighty. We see patients throughout their journey with cancer. We see the same people every week and get to know each other and provide very specialized and specific patient care. Our patients tell myself and my colleagues often how much we mean to them and we feel the exact same way about our patients.

For the past 29 days and counting, our hospital along with 7 other bargaining units in the Providence Oregon system have been on strike. We have been out in the rain, sun and snow picketing for what feels like an eternity. For many of my colleagues, myself included, I have felt very conflicted about striking. It is a scary feeling to be confronted by loss of income even when you know the cause is undeniably important. You are faced with your morality head on and must make what feels like an impossible decision daily to ultimately do the right thing, while losing a lot in the process.

This being said, I don't think it needs to be this way. We did not want to strike but we have been forced into this situation by an extremely rich and powerful employer. At this time, striking is the only way we can demand to be treated fairly and fight for what our patients deserve. Ultimately, all we want to do is provide our patients with the best care possible while also being able to take care of ourselves in the process and not have to worry about affording our mortgage, rent, childcare, HEALTH INSURANCE, etc.

The strike has been stressful to say the least. Luckily, my husband is employed and is able to support us with a small income. However, many of my colleagues are not in the same situation. Many have no income, are single, have children or both spouses work for Providence and are missing out on wages at the same time. There have been hardship funds to help but these do not replace wages and are drying up. We are feeling forced to quit our fight without a good contract because people are unable to support themselves.

If we were able to file for unemployment, this would allow us to hold the picket line in order to have more ability to bargain with our employer. Without any source of income to individuals who are striking, the union holds very limited power to compete with this huge corporation which feels like an extremely unfair position for us to be in. We need a way to be able to even the playing field so we can go back to work and provide the loving and amazing care we give to our patients daily.

Thank you so much for your time.

Sincerely,
Emily BSN RN OCN