

Submitter: Alicia Fischer

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Labor and Business

Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB916

My name is Alicia Fischer and I'm an RN and a member of the Oregon Nurses Association union. I support SB 916 which would repeal the law blocking unemployment benefits to workers on strike. This bill would help ensure that workers are able to stay afloat while fighting for a fair contract.

We are striking for fair and competitive wages to keep up competitive with other hospitals. These competitive wages decrease turnover and increase job satisfaction. We are striking for safer staffing in order to provide safe and compassionate care for our patients and our community. We care for the most vulnerable and they deserve safe care.

We are striking for better health benefits. Our hospital (Providence) has farmed employee healthcare out to Aetna to cut costs which in turn has resulted in higher deductibles and less care covered. Nurses have had their chemo medications denied. My doctor has had to fight with Aetna to get my medications covered for a chronic condition. Until I meet my deductible, I am paying entirely out of pocket for many office visits.

Once our insurance runs out while on strike we have to pay out of pocket for Cobra. We aren't bringing in any money while we strike. How can we continue to afford to live if we can't apply for unemployment?

Being eligible for unemployment allows more workers to strike, increasing our strength and will result in us not taking a poor contract just so we can get back to work quicker so we can pay our bills.

Strikes are always a measure of absolute last resort. Please help ensure that workers like me – nurses, teachers, grocery and construction workers and so many more – are not forced into unsafe or unfair contracts simply because we can't afford to exercise our legally protected right to strike. Please vote yes on SB 916.