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On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Labor and Business

Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB916

As you are likely aware, negotiations between employers and represented employees have been contentious. Many employers in the Portland area have refused to bargain in good faith to provide employees with wages adequate for employees to live in the Portland area. They also often decline to offer benefits that support employees access to adequate healthcare, timeoff to take care of family and personal issues. When bargaining it is critical that employees have financial resources to enable them to survive weeks off of work in order to push employers to make progress on bargaining. Witness the NSLU strike, the Providence nurses and other clinicians strike, the recent Local 189 (City of Portland) negotiations that barely settled before a walk out. When striking we are unable to make our wages which means we are likely to be unable to fund the cost of COBRA benefits to maintain insurance coverage for our families. It's a struggle to keep the lights on and food on the table while attending pickets, etc... Employers are well aware of the cost of a strike and often use that as a way to refuse to bargain or to make poor offers to settle employee concerns during bargaining. One way to ensure a more fair playing field is allow union members to access unemployment during an extended strike.