

Submitter: Oregon Nurse
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,

In my experience working for Providence for the last 6 years, nurse staffing is always low because nurses will not be compensated at the market rate of other regional hospitals. This pushes the burden on the nurses to take an increased patient load while not getting breaks or lunches at times impacting the nurses' overall wellbeing and ability to tend to their own human needs. Then that impacts patient care and safety.

Additionally, even being a full-time employee there are times that I am sent home for staffing and have to use my hospital-provided sick leave to cover my weekly income needs, so then when I need the paid time off, I might not have it. In the case of a strike, I need to be able to rely on a form of income that is not guaranteed to me. The cost of eggs, and groceries continues to rise but Providence does not want to pay me fair market wages to be able to survive. I am the primary earner in my family and the pressure to have to not work and strike when I'd rather be working is terrible. And my supervisors refuse to provide me with a reference so I can get PRN temporary work. Still, they can personally email me and share a positive patient testimonial that was received while I was on strike.

It seems like my options are to a new job - which I don't want to because I like my colleagues and location - or sit on the strike line, and take out more debt for my family to pay our mortgage. Unemployment benefits would be a lifesaver right now as I strike for fair wages and treatment. But the only way to get unemployment benefits is if Providence refused to let me work under their unfair contract.

The social-emotional and financial impact of this unfair labor and the need to strike without pay is extremely distressing for my family. We have disrupted sleep and increased stress levels. Meanwhile, the Providence executives are making millions of dollars annually with bonuses. I've never received a bonus. I have received a coupon for a free ham from Safeway while CEOs get multimillion-dollar bonuses for no involvement in patient care at all. It seems dubious why the frontline caregiving nurses susceptible to all the risks are not to be valued by the CEOs whose salaries would not exist without them.

We received no bonus during COVID-19 and were forced to reuse the same N95 masks deliberately as instructed by management. We were told to ignore conditions that required PPE like MRSA. I value giving my care to the community and I'd love to get back to work, but until I can get a fair contract or a professional reference from my supervisor to get another job, unemployment benefits would be majorly beneficial for my family.

In the Operating Room, Providence has hired temporary workers, who work for double the money and are told they have to stay for double the amount of time, and yet Providence says that it's financially unstable for them to pay their existing loyal staff nurses fair market wages.

I thank you for your time and consideration.
Oregon Nurse