



TEAMSTERS LOCAL 223

Representing
Office, Professional, Medical, Technical and Public Employees
Throughout the State of Oregon and Southwest Washington.



Austin DePaolo
SECRETARY-TREASURER

February 13, 2025

To: Chair Taylor, Vice-Chair Bonham, and Members of the Senate Committee on Labor and Business,

As a proud union member and labor leader with Teamsters Local Union 223 with a membership of over 2200 workers in Private Emergency Medical Services and Private Health Care and members in the public sector who can strike. I am writing to urge you to support Senate Bill 916.

Strikes are never an easy choice. They are a last resort when workers have no other way to fight for fair pay, safe conditions, and dignity on the job. Yet, under current law, workers who stand up for their rights are punished by being denied unemployment benefits. That's wrong. SB 916 fixes this by giving striking workers the same safety net that other unemployed workers already have.

In our Local Union, we haven't had a strike in decades. We work hard to avoid it. We know that strikes disrupt lives and businesses, and we use every tool we have to reach fair agreements without walking off the job. But if a strike ever became necessary, workers should not be left without any support. This bill provides a safety net that should be there when it's needed.

Some say that allowing unemployment benefits during a strike will cause more and longer strikes. But from my experience, that's simply not true. Strikes are hard, and workers don't take them lightly. Even with unemployment benefits, it's not a full paycheck. It's just a lifeline. What SB 916 does is help workers survive while they fight for what's right, ensuring that employers come to the table and bargain in good faith.

Others claim this bill will hurt businesses. However, strong labor rights build stronger communities. When workers win fair wages and safe workplaces, they spend more locally and help our economy grow. SB 916 simply levels the playing field, creating a fairer and more balanced labor environment.

I have spent years fighting for working people, and I know that laws like SB 916 are about justice and dignity for those who do the hard work that keeps Oregon running.

Please vote YES on Senate Bill 916 and stand with Oregon's workers.

Cordially,

Austin DePaolo
Secretary-Treasurer