

Submitter: Holly Smith

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Labor and Business

Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB916

I urge lawmakers to pass Senate Bill 916 to support striking workers in Oregon.

I have never been in an active strike from my organization thankfully. However I think about what it would be like and what it would take for me to even consider striking. I work for the Oregon Department of Human Services and I work with families that are on temporary aid for needy families (or cash benefits) and I also work with families that are trying to get away from domestic violence situations. I literally support families that are in the lowest income situations/most dangerous situations of their entire lives. And at the same time that I'm helping these families try to navigate these situations...I'm helping them find resources and sometimes I'm helping them get payments for their needs every month :their rent, their phone bill, a moving truck, whatever it is they may need... in the back of my mind I'm concerned about my family's needs. I worry every day how will I pay my bills? How will I feed my kids?

If my organization were to go on strike because we could not meet the absolute bare minimum that was necessary to keep us in the position that we're in now and it's important to note here that something like half of the people that I work with don't know if they're going to be able to pay their rent next month they are utilizing the food banks a lot of them are even eligible for SNAP benefits that they are working in the office to give out but if we could not as an organization meet the bare minimum to keep us in this position where we are still housing and food insecure every month if it was going to be worse than that and we did have to go on strike the idea of not having health insurance the idea of not being able to have even a partial wage for an undetermined amount of time is a huge bargaining chip against us and they know it.

I'm urging you, heck I'm begging you to pass this because any family that has decided to risk it all by being on the strike line has decided that it's something they absolutely have to do and they did not make that decision lightly. This also means fairer benefits and wages for employees and it allows employees to do their jobs without having to have so much worry during bargaining sessions.

Workers strike only after every other option has been exhausted. In many cases, they continue working under expired contracts for months or years, making sacrifices because they care about their jobs. SB 916 is a simple, fair measure to ensure that when workers must strike, they don't face total financial devastation.

Employers often use healthcare benefits as a weapon in labor disputes. Cutting off healthcare during a strike puts workers and their families in an impossible situation.

Unemployment benefits are a reasonable safeguard that will prevent workers from falling into crisis while they stand up for fair wages and conditions.

This bill is low-cost, does not significantly impact employers, and would result in shorter strikes and fairer contracts. Oregon should pass SB 916 and support its workers.