

Submitter: Rachel Scholz
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Labor and Business
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB916

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in strong support of SB 916, which would extend unemployment insurance (UI) benefits to workers who find themselves unemployed due to labor disputes. This bill is a critical step toward ensuring that Oregon's unemployment system serves all workers fairly, particularly those exercising their right to advocate for safer workplaces and fair conditions.

As a nurse, I know firsthand how often we are at odds with our employers over critical issues like safe patient ratios and the quality of care we provide to our community. When healthcare workers stand up and fight for better conditions, we're not just fighting for ourselves—we're fighting for our patients, our neighbors, and the health of all Oregonians. Yet, when we take a stand, we risk losing our paychecks with no safety net, even though we are acting in the public's best interest.

Remember, one day you might be a patient. And I promise, when that day comes, I will fight for your safety and for you to receive the good, safe, quality care that every Oregonian deserves. But we cannot do that if we are forced to choose between advocating for patient safety and keeping food on our tables.

The current law unfairly punishes workers like us who are left without income during a labor dispute, while employers—often large corporations—can afford to stall negotiations. SB 916 corrects this imbalance by allowing workers to receive UI benefits when unemployment is caused by an employer's refusal to reach a fair agreement. Other states, such as New York and New Jersey, have already adopted similar policies, recognizing that UI is meant to provide temporary economic relief for all workers facing involuntary unemployment.

This bill also benefits Oregon's economy. When workers suddenly lose their income, they cut back on spending, which impacts local businesses and destabilizes communities. Providing UI benefits during labor disputes helps keep families afloat and ensures that our economy remains resilient.

SB 916 is about fairness, economic stability, and supporting the workers who dedicate their lives to protecting and serving their communities. I urge this committee to stand with Oregon workers and pass SB 916.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Rachel Scholz
Registered Nurse