



TINA KOTEK
GOVERNOR

June 24, 2025

The Honorable Rob Wagner
President of the Senate
Oregon State Capitol
Salem, Oregon 97301

The Honorable Julie Fahey
Speaker of the House
Oregon State Capitol
Salem, Oregon 97301

RE: Senate Bill 916

Dear President Wagner and Speaker Fahey:

I am signing Senate Bill 916 today, which amends current statute to allow workers who are on strike to be eligible for unemployment benefits for up to 10 weeks of the strike. I am writing this letter in recognition of the healthy debate between workers and employers seeking to define what is fair and unfair in the context of bargaining, service delivery to Oregonians, and the strength of our workforce and economy.

My position on this bill considers these factors equally. I fully support its intent and the future for Oregon workers it is helping to build: one where workers and employers start on the same footing amid the competing and complicated dynamics that cause and perpetuate strikes.

In my review of the arguments for and against Senate Bill 916, I found the following passage from Emily, an RN based in Hood River, particularly instructive of the reality that workers confront when making the decision to strike:

“For many of my colleagues, myself included, I have felt very conflicted about striking. It is a scary feeling to be confronted by loss of income even when you know the cause is undeniably important. You are faced with your morality head on and must make what feels like an impossible decision daily to ultimately do the right thing, while losing a lot in the process.”

Striking is not a decision that is taken lightly or made quickly. It is a decision made at the edge of a cliff, with economic truths, working conditions and - in some cases - client conditions hanging in the balance. The potential impacts to individual workers carry drastically different consequences compared to employers. Those differences may be a rent check, a trip to the doctor, or the ability to put food on the table for your family.

While I take the expenses employers may face seriously, an individual's housing, health, and wellness exist on a different scale, and SB 916 seeks to balance that scale toward equality. Oregon's unemployment insurance (UI) system should serve as a safety net to every Oregonian

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who needs it. Lawmakers responded to concerns opponents raised regarding UI through a series of amendments, while holding true to the north star of SB 916.

Moreover, strikes are rare, and a majority of the time, short lived when a fair offer is reached between workers and employees. That is the objective of a strike and the outcome we all want. Every bargaining effort demands that both parties rise to the occasion to carve out a path that cumulatively benefits each side. Senate Bill 916 will help drive toward this very outcome.

I welcome continued dialogue through implementation and rulemaking to ensure that Senate Bill 916 meets its charge toward an equal playing field for workers and employers.

Sincerely,



Governor Tina Kotek