



March 12, 2024

Professional Distinction

Personal Dignity

Patient Advocacy

Senator Bobby Joe Champion, Chair
Senate Committee on Jobs and Economic Development
95 University Avenue W.
St. Paul, MN 55155

Representative Jay Xiong, Chair
House Workforce Development Finance and Policy Committee
100 Rev Dr Martin Luther King Jr Boulevard
St. Paul, MN 55155

Chair Champion, Chair Xiong, and Committee Members,

On behalf of the Minnesota Nurses Association (MNA), I am writing to you today to express MNA's strong support for SF3588/HF3446, which would provide unemployment insurance eligibility for striking workers. As a labor union whose members have experienced extended strikes in the past, our 22,000+ members know exactly how important this is for workers who are forced to make the difficult decision to go on strike for reasons such as to address working conditions, patient safety issues, or worker benefits.

The right to strike is a key component to where labor unions get their power. Unfortunately, many workers are unable to even consider going on strike due to the impacts it would have on their family if the strike were to go on for weeks. This inability to engage in striking to improve working and patient conditions also tends to disproportionately impact BIPOC workers, as well as women – who make up the majority of MNA's members. Heads of single-income families also tend to have nearly impossible financial hurdles to overcome for them to stand in solidarity with their colleagues. Ensuring that striking workers are eligible for UI benefits will provide more equitable bargaining and strength to go into a strike should it be necessary.

Additionally, this legislation would discourage the types of anti-worker efforts and wasteful spending that the major health systems deploy during strikes. For example, in 2016, Allina Health spent nearly \$105 million hiring temporary nurses – many of them from out-of-state – rather than negotiating in good faith at the bargaining table to avoid slashing worker benefits.

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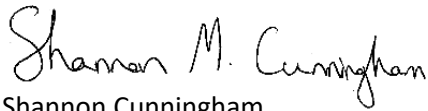


AFL-CIO

Our state and national economy have long been rigged in favor of corporations, including many of the tax-exempt (“nonprofit”) corporations – the big health systems – that have effectively taken over the state healthcare delivery system through mergers and other consolidation. Last session, the Minnesota Legislature took many steps forward to protect and expand workers' rights and protections in our state. These were big strides in rebalancing the major economic misalignment in our state, but we know more is needed.

Expanding UI benefits to striking workers would be a huge lift for workers and would provide more protection, and security, for anyone who is forced to make the difficult decision – a decision no one ever *wants* to make – to go on strike. We hope that members of the committees, and all legislators in both chambers, will support this important piece of legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Shannon M. Cunningham". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Shannon Cunningham
Director of Governmental and Community Relations
Minnesota Nurses Association