



May 24, 2013

TO: Senator Chip Shields, Chair
Senate General Government, Consumer and Small Business Protection
Committee
FR: Bob Joondeph, DRO Executive Director

Disability Rights Oregon supports HB 2669A which will assure that young people with disabilities have an equal opportunity to pursue employment and a career.

In the modern job market, internships are often an essential way to obtain the training and experience necessary to compete for future employment. If a person with disabilities, or any other protected characteristic, is foreclosed from obtaining this training, the result is a perpetuation of unfair disadvantages that too often result in unemployment, underemployment and dependency.

As stated in ORS 659A.103, it is the public policy of Oregon to guarantee individuals the fullest possible participation in the social and economic life of the state, including engagement in remunerative employment, without discrimination on the basis of disability. HB 2669A recognizes that such a guarantee must include the opportunity to compete for internship experiences on a level playing field.

The unemployment rate for Americans with disabilities who are ready, able and willing to work remains over twice that for able-bodied individuals. This remains the case despite having federal and state laws for over twenty years that forbid disability-based discrimination in employment. Oregon should do what it can to encourage and promote employment by assuring equal opportunity to obtain and retain internship training.

Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony.