



Date: 3/13/2019

To: The House Business and Labor Committee

RE: Position statement on HB 2818, Age Discrimination

Chair Barker, Vice Chair Bynum, Vice Chair Barreto, and members of the House Business and Labor Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. My name is Iris Hodge and I am here representing Main Street Alliance of Oregon. We are a network of 4,000 small business owners, across the state. As small business owners we are intrinsically linked to the health and wellbeing of our community members. Our community is our neighbors, customers and our employees. We live and operate our businesses in our communities and when we cast aside our elderly community members, we do a disservice to our businesses.

I would like to share two stories from our members about why we are supportive of HB 2818.

From Amber Halbert Childress, co-owner of High Ridge Roofing and Construction in Springfield. "We had to reconfigure our business to accommodate an aging employee and it actually worked out in the long run, for our benefit. We shifted this employee to bidding and roof repairs and it actually increased our business by nearly 25% last year. He is also able to train a younger apprentice/journeyman Roofer while he accompanies our lead, on repairs. It was a chance we took to provide a loyal employee with work until he reaches retirement age in 4 years and our 18 year old apprentice will be able to step up and become our project manager."

And from Jim Houser, of Hawthorne Auto Clinic, in Portland. "Professions like auto repair can become both physically and intellectually challenging for older workers. At the same time, like health care coverage or successful re-integration of ex-offenders into society, our political/economic system mostly relies on employers to solve our social challenges. In our 36 years our company has had (and still have) employees who have worked for us 25-30 years and eventually many do not perform at the same level they did when they were first hired. It is challenging to profitably match older workers skills and abilities with the available work. We have found it sometimes difficult, but not impossible. The goodwill we generate with our younger staff who see that we are as loyal to them as they are to us, makes it all worthwhile."

In closing, this is an important bill to help keep the communities we serve, prosperous and to level the playing field for employers who do the right thing like the owners at Hawthorne Auto Clinic and High Ridge Roofing and Construction. We, at Main Street Alliance, respectfully urge you to support HB 2818.

Sincerely,

Iris Hodge  
Oregon State Lead  
Main Street Alliance