

May 6, 2019

Chairperson – Paul Holvey
House Committee on Rules

RE: May 8, 2019 Public Hearing and Public Work Session - Opposition to HB 3431

Dear Chairperson Holvey and Members of the House Committee on Rules:

I respectfully submit this as my written testimony and opposition to HB 3431 for your review and consideration.

My name is Linda Haseman and since 2012 I have operated my own business entity in Oregon named Virtual Administrative and Advocacy Services, LLC. Prior to starting my own business, my training, background, and experience was in the diverse area of Human Resources Management, inclusive of the budgeting and fiscal administration of various federal and state funding streams.

Since starting my own business, I have had the pleasure of advocating for employment opportunities for blind persons in Oregon. I have worked closely with several blind persons in the Business Enterprise Program for a number of years now. One of my greatest accomplishments was assisting the blind community in their review of the many changes, revisions, etc., to the numerous Amendments (8 in total I recall) that occurred before the successful passage of HB 3253. Because of my close review of the various amendments to HB 3253, I am knowledgeable of a lot of the email correspondences that occurred throughout the legislative process.

Based on the above information, correspondence clearly reflects that Representatives and individuals who worked on HB 3253 very much “contemplated” that there were going to be many opportunities in a lot of new/different places that were opening up for blind persons as priority was being given in all public buildings, which was huge for the Business Enterprise Program (BEP).

Even though the Oregon Revised Statutes (ORS 346.510-570) governing the Business Enterprise Program had been in place for quite some time and contained language that was strong, they had been constantly challenged, or in many cases ignored, by various public entities. The new language in HB 3253 made it very clear all the public properties and buildings that were to be included as part of the priority language embedded in the House Bill.

Additionally, I was part of the Oregon Commission for the Blind’s fiscal impact committee and it was asked multiple times during the fiscal impact public meeting by several committee members why none of the state agencies, departments, political subdivisions, etc., were in attendance to share their fiscal impact concerns to the Oregon Commission for the Blind’s proposed rules that were implementing House Bill 3253. However, for whatever reason, those public entities did not show up as affected parties to the rulemaking and fiscal impact process. Likewise, those public entities did not show up to express concerns, fiscal impact or otherwise, during the passage of HB 3253 in 2017, even though there were plenty of opportunities for them to have done so, since there were a total of eight (8) amendments in the making of it.

As I understand it, HB 3431 was introduced late in the 2019 legislative session by Metro, without any discussions with the Business Enterprise Consumer Committee (BECC) prior to its introduction. Unfortunately, it wasn't until after the BECC learned of Metro's introduction of HB 3431, and also after the BECC Chairperson reached out to Metro, did dialogue with the BECC start to occur from Metro's representatives, and the Oregon Commission for the Blind. In retrospect, Metro is now having meaningful discussion and dialogue on this matter with the BECC's Chairperson, which seems to be productive despite the prior missteps. Furthermore, it is my understanding that the BECC and the Vending Facility Managers they are mandated to represent are interested in a collaborative solution and remedy outside of the legislative process, which I am in support of as well.

Boldly speaking, when all key factors are reflected upon, amending HB 3253 language at this time when it hasn't even gotten its legs yet, especially after so many individuals positively and constructively worked on it throughout the 2017 legislative session seems in my opinion, quite frankly, ridiculous. Which is why I am respectfully submitting my written testimony and articulating my opposition to HB 3431 to all of you.

As an alternative to HB 3431, I would encourage your committee to have Metro, the Business Enterprise Consumer Committee (BECC), and the Oregon Commission for the Blind constructively explore and collaboratively work together on other viable options outside of the legislative process. Whereby, all three (3) parties have a seat at the table, and whereby employment for blind persons in the Business Enterprise Program remains a paramount part of the discussion and solution, as the unanimous passage of HB 3253 in 2017 by both the House and the Senate intended it to be.

Thank you for your time and interest in this important employment matter to blind business persons in Oregon.

Sincerely,



Linda Haseman, Owner
Virtual Administrative & Advocacy Services, LLC
Multnomah County Resident