



Senate Committee on Health Care

Testimony in Support of SB 567

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AARP Oregon is pleased to support SB 567 to expand Oregon's discrimination law to include protection in health care treatment. AARP is the nation's largest nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to empowering Americans 50 and older to choose how they live as they age. With 503,000 members in Oregon, AARP works to strengthen communities and advocate for what matters most to families, with a focus on health security, financial stability and personal fulfillment.

During most of 2020, Oregon's Crisis Care Guidelines relied on co-morbid conditions and long-term prognosis, among other criteria. This had the effect of discrimination against older adults who, research shows, are much more likely to have co-morbid conditions and whose long-term prognosis is often shorter than younger adults.

From the beginning of the pandemic, AARP has been fighting against age-related discrimination in treatments for COVID-19. On March 31, 2020, AARP's National Executive Vice President and Chief Advocacy & Engagement Officer Nancy A. LeMond issued a statement in response to the serious and ongoing concerns of medical rationing:

This virus doesn't discriminate, and neither should those entrusted with deciding who gets access to health care to treat it. Using age or disability to categorically exclude people from accessing treatment would be discriminatory, and AARP opposes it. Policymakers must take action now to avoid putting patients, families and health care professionals in the untenable position of having to ration health care.

The statistics are rather shocking. In Oregon, as of February 24, 97% of *all COVID deaths* are age 50 and older, 91% are 60 and older and 52% are 80 and older. This is the population most likely to die from COVID and we should make sure our laws in Oregon reflect that reality and protect the most vulnerable among us, including age and disability.

Federal law is not enough; we need to put protection into Oregon law, allowing those who face discrimination based on race, color, national origin sex, sexual orientation, gender identity as well as age and disability, to have ready access to Oregon state courts. This is not unique; Oregon has other discrimination laws with similar federal counterparts. Sadly, we have learned from this pandemic and from the testimony you will hear today, that we need to *add* protection from discrimination in health care to our state law. It lets Oregonians know that we as a state will not tolerate discrimination and will provide all Oregonians with all the tools necessary to make sure it doesn't happen here. We urge you to pass SB 567.