

House Bill 2938 Age Discrimination Task force

Public Hearing on March 15th, 2021

House Committee on Business and Labor

Mr. Chair and members of the committee, my name is Ty Schwoeffermann, and I am testifying as a community member not affiliated with any organization.

As an activist and lifelong resident of Oregon this bill came to my attention because it aligns with my core belief that Oregon needs to continue to refine its stated promise to equal rights and civil rights for all. I have seen so many opportunities pass by to correct and address the problems in our systems.

This bill would work on repairing one of the cogs in the wheel that make our state whole, age discrimination deserves more attention, care, and improvement. When one form of discrimination compounds with others like sex and race discrimination it creates a stew of discrimination that is hard to fathom or comprehend. Many people turn their eyes and close their ears when things get more complicated with the intersection of racism and sexism generate situations that most would fear to ever address. We must work on these issues continuously through thoughtful study, data analysis and laws that penalize behaviors prevalent in our society.

In my 12 years working in Oregon on community issues and serving in public, private, and non-profit sectors I have seen many examples of discrimination that goes unaddressed. Racism compounded by sexism compounded by age discrimination has been at the center of leaders in my community having shortened careers, opportunities cut short, or outright dismissals. Age discrimination is so real and when there are blatant examples of it we have to stop turning to look the other way. Ruby Huaghton-Pitts, who was the first Black director of the Oregon AARP, is experiencing the consequences of agism and racism. When leaders like Ruby get dismissed from their job for no good reason, we all have to pause and ask ourselves “What is going on?” The leaders advocating for the most vulnerable Oregonians need to be revered as shero’s in our community and not dismissed like the way they do so often.

I support House Bill 2938 with some minor additions. Please expand this bill to include the intersection of age, race, and gender. This can easily be done through amendments that would allow for the expansion of this bill to intersect age discrimination through the taskforce process that examines race and gender as they factor in our society.

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