

Re: HB 2938  
Dear Fellow Committee Members,

I am submitting testimony today in support of HB 2938. My desire to see this bill through to passage rests in my concern about the person who actually developed the concept and originally brought us this bill- former Oregon Director of AARP, Ruby Haughton Pitts.

I find it rather ironic that this bill which was developed pre-session, but it is now too late to assist her.

As a card-carrying member of AARP, I cannot support the rights of older Americans enough, and especially when injustice intersects with race and gender.

As some of you know, Ruby was summarily dismissed from her leadership position with AARP last month without any process-- and just before she would have been vested in the organization's retirement plan. At age 64, she also was left without health insurance-- left to pay for expensive COBRA coverage, or attempt to purchase an individual policy on the ACA exchange. The fact that whatever the reasons for her abrupt dismissal have not been shared with her, make the necessity of the Task Force required by HB 2938 even more necessary.

In addition to age, Ruby is also faced with gender and racial discrimination issues, as are all too many other women of her age, race and gender. We have seen the data coming out of this year-long COVID experience, showing clearly that women of all ages have borne the brunt of this pandemic. We know only too well, that women living longer than their male counterparts have had life-long earnings significantly less than men and women of color are even more disadvantaged and impoverished. When they lose their jobs after age 50, the likelihood of being hired into another similar position is unlikely.

The intersection of age, gender and race are very much intertwined. It is for these reasons, that I would like to see the bill sponsors consider add the issues of gender and race to the scope of this important Task Force.

Rep. Janelle Bynum