

February 4, 2023

To Chair Holvey and Members of the House Business & Labor Committee:

I am writing in support of HB 2800. I urge you to pass this long-overdue bill.

I am 36 years old, but I have already begun to witness the negative impacts of age discrimination in the workplace and the impacts on some of my colleagues: In one instance, I heard someone on a hiring committee declare that they were seeking “younger blood” when hiring for a certain position. In another instance, assumptions were made (erroneously) about the desire and ability of a longer-term employee to be trained into a promotion. This someone was not only an extremely intelligent and capable learner, but someone who consistently invested much of her time and energy into helping and training her colleagues in turn, myself included. (Like many “isms,” age discrimination disproportionately impacts women, beginning as young as 40 (!), and this is even *more* true for BIPOC women.)

All candidates for hire and/or promotion should be evaluated based on their qualifications, skills, and experience, not on stereotypes or misguided assumptions - period.

I also write in support of HB 2800 as I consider my own future, and the challenges my generation will certainly face: Between graduating into the Great Recession, rising housing prices, stagnant wages, and vanishing pension plans, Millennials can anticipate reduced support as we approach retirement age. The Social Security full retirement age continues to climb; some projections put full retirement age at 69 or even 70 by 2050. In short, on average, Millennials can expect to work about a decade longer than generations before us. As a result, though many of my peers may not yet realize it, ageism in the workplace is very likely to hit us longer and, therefore, harder: We will experience a full additional decade of working as an older adult, and therefore a full decade more potential exposure to age discrimination right when it may hurt us most.

Oregon has demonstrated great leadership on many other types of discrimination, and we should continue to lead on age discrimination in the workplace.

Madeline Kovacs
Portland, Oregon