

Feb. 18, 2025

Dear Chair Grayber, Vice Chairs Elmer & Munoz and Members of the Committee,

It's time to fix age discrimination laws in Oregon. I am writing today in support of HB 3187.

I'm a retired staff member of AARP and through my work in communities throughout the state, I've heard heart breaking stories of older workers who can't find work. Often these folks left the workforce because of family caregiving or job layoffs and were desperate to find a new employment. Imagine being 55, laid off and feeling like every job application was a door slammed in your face. Those years leading up to retirement are critical to keep our fellow Oregonians out of poverty later in life. They need the opportunity to build retirement savings, maintain access to health insurance and work to achieve the highest Social Security benefit to which they are eligible. The National Alliance to End Homelessness found that nearly one in four people experiencing homelessness last year was over the age of 55. The problem is only getting worse. Older people are now the fastest growing segment of the homeless population.

Preventing age discrimination is not just a win for workers. It will help the state overall. Oregon has a workforce shortage, and it is only common sense to value older workers for the knowledge, skills and abilities. Many businesses have opened their eyes to the reality that older workers are good for the bottom line. Oregon is the oldest state on the West Coast and customers often appreciate interacting with workers in their own or nearby generations. However, many hiring managers or computer-aided resume readers, pass applicants with the "wrong" birthdate or college graduation date.

Older workers are voters, caregivers, parents, grandparents and volunteers in our communities. Let's give all Oregonians regardless of age a fair shot at competing for employment without being turned away because of age before they even get an interview. This is the right thing to do.

Sincerely,

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