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February 14, 2025

RE: Update Oregon's Workplace Age Discrimination Law - Support for HB 3187

Dear Chair Grayber, Vice Chairs Elmer & Munoz and Members of the House Labor & Workplace Standards Committee,

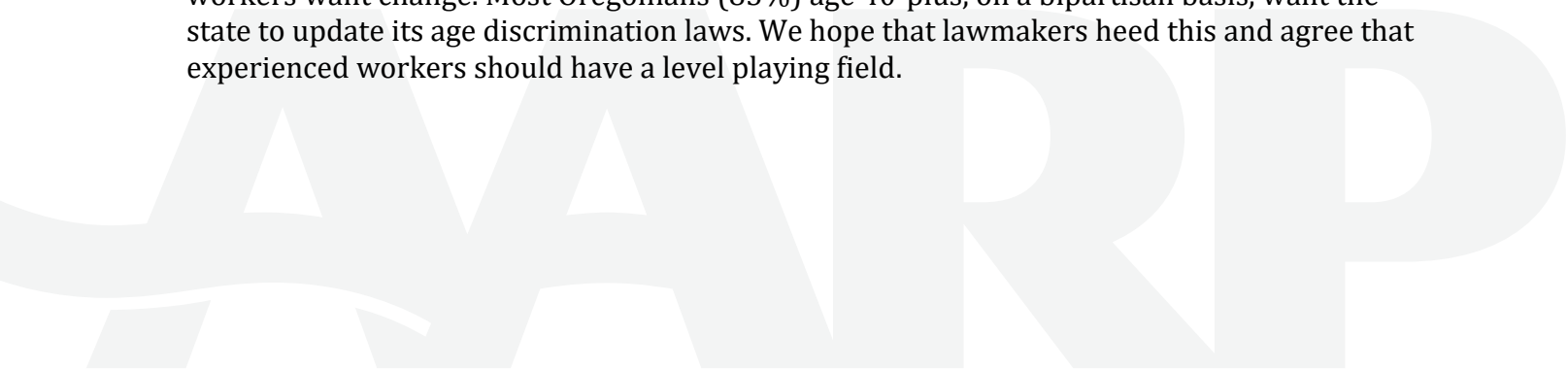
As the State Director of AARP Oregon, I urge this committee to support HB 3187. Age discrimination is a pervasive issue in Oregon's workplaces, with 55% of working Oregonians aged 40 and above experiencing or witnessing workplace age discrimination. This undermines the financial security of older workers, perpetuates harmful stereotypes, and exacerbates workforce shortages. Older workers take longer to find jobs compared to younger counterparts. Some are pushed into early retirement or forced into lower-paying jobs.

Age discrimination has seemingly received a 'pass' in our society, compared to other types of workplace discrimination, as it is much tougher to prove. Court decisions starting in 2008 have narrowed protections for older workers, signaling to employers that some amount of proven age discrimination is legally allowable.

According to an AARP survey, well over half of all Oregon voters age 40-plus in the labor force say that they have seen or experienced age discrimination at work, and among them, 88% think that it's a common occurrence. We can and we must do better.

Our state's workplace age discrimination law is failing to protect workers. Older Oregonians are finding themselves unfairly treated, during the hiring and firing process. For many, the financial necessity to remain in the workforce means they must contend with biases that younger workers do not face. Data shows it takes displaced older workers longer to find that next job, and proving age discrimination remains significantly more challenging compared to other forms of discrimination. This not only takes an emotional toll on older workers but also threatens their financial security.

It's time to update and clarify Oregon's law to restore older workers' rights to be treated fairly based on their skills and experience, not their age. Oregonians recognize that age discrimination in the workplace—like any other kind of discrimination—is wrong, and Oregon workers want change. Most Oregonians (85%) age 40-plus, on a bipartisan basis, want the state to update its age discrimination laws. We hope that lawmakers heed this and agree that experienced workers should have a level playing field.



HB 3187 represents a pivotal opportunity to address and rectify workplace age discrimination in Oregon. By removing age-bias barriers, the bill ensures that workers are judged solely on their qualifications, fostering a fair and inclusive work environment for everyone.

AARP staff and volunteers have been actively engaging with legislators across Oregon, sharing compelling stories, research, and the legislative solution encapsulated in HB 3187. Their efforts highlight the devastating impact of age discrimination on older workers and the urgent need for legislative action. Demonstrating strong statewide support, AARP has collected nearly 4,000 signed petitions to Oregon House and Senate legislators advocating for the bill. These petitions will be hand-delivered to legislators in the coming weeks, underscoring the public's demand for change.

Discrimination is discrimination. Period. And workplace age discrimination has no place in Oregon. This issue transcends party lines, with widespread support for updating the law across the political spectrum. Passing HB 3187 is a crucial step towards eliminating age discrimination in Oregon's workplaces. Let's take a stand and give older workers the fair chance they deserve.

Thank you for your consideration and for your commitment to make Oregon a great place for people of all ages.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bandana" with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Bandana Shrestha, State Director
AARP Oregon
bshrestha@aarp.org