

February 19, 2025

To: Chair Grayber, Vice-Chairs Elmer and Muñoz, and Members of the Committee

Re: Support for House Bill 3187, the workplace age discrimination bill

My name is Claire Berger and I am the State Public Policy Chair for the American Association of University Women of Oregon. I write this letter in strong support of House Bill 3187.

Oregon law must make sure that discrimination in the workplace based on age is unacceptable and illegal. Under the law as defined by courts, all employers have to do is point to another reason for an action unfavorable to its employees – even if age was a factor in their decision. This loophole is not fair. If it's age discrimination, employees should be given an opportunity to hold employers accountable.

Age is an asset to employers, not a liability. It is important to respect and value experience, not dismiss it.

There may be situations where an employer needs to know an applicant's age, but not before a conditional offer is made. Right now computer programs receiving job applications can just automatically reject an applicant based on age – before anyone even glances at the application. This isn't fair. I was a victim of age discrimination and was forced out of the workforce in my mid 50's. I had an excellent resume with many enthusiastic references from across the state and nation. When applying for a position, I was usually called in for interviews but never chosen. I would find out later that the candidates chosen for the positions were younger and had less experience.

Older Oregonians have to provide financial support to themselves and their families just as much as younger Oregonians. If they can do the job, they should be given an opportunity to do it.

I urge you to support House Bill 3187.

Sincerely,

Claire Berger

Forest Grove, Oregon