

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 Mardy Stevens and I am a member of the American Association of University Women of Oregon. I write this letter in strong and avid support of House Bill 3187.

At one time in my career, I was hired because of my extensive experience. And, just before me retirement, I had the good fortune to interact with much younger colleagues. It was evident from our many interactions that they benefitted from my experience, and I benefitted from their ideas. It was an authentic win-win for the profession.

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 is age discrimination, employees should be given an opportunity to hold employers accountable.

Age is an asset to employers, as experience time and again shows its value. I saw this directly during my career, as noted above. It is important in all work situations to respect 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.

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,

Mardy Stevens
Gresham, OR 97030