

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

I believe that Oregon law must protect all workers from age discrimination. It is presently far too easy for employers to hide behind rationales that appear to be non-ageist, when in fact the real reason for an applicant's claimed disqualification is simply bias towards a senior. This situation occurs frequently. Discriminating employers then use a false defense in court proceedings, without substantiating why a senior applicant is actually, factually unable to perform the job responsibilities. Such a practice is unfair and should be illegal in Oregon. If an employer bars a senior applicant on the basis of age, the applicant should be given honest reasons for the restriction and the reasons must actually be disqualifying. Any such reasons must have a direct and immediate bearing on the job requirements, and an older applicant should have the opportunity to dispute the assumption.

Age discrimination denies an older applicant access to well-paying jobs and therefore limits their ability to be economically self-sufficient. It also excludes a valuable group of potential employees from the workplace.

In any situation where an employer needs to know an applicant's age, the request must be made before a conditional employment offer is made. Currently, computer programs receiving job applications can simply automatically reject an applicant based on assumed age – before the application is reviewed by a human. This is grossly unfair.

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 strongly urge you to support House Bill 3187.

Sincerely,

Susan M. Teel
Portland, Oregon 97205