

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 Nancy Brown, and I am a member of American Association of University Women of Oregon. I write this letter in strong support of House Bill 3187.

In 2015, my husband was part of an across the company layoff at a major employer here in Albany. He was 61 at the time with 39 years of experience with the firm, and a department manager for five years at the time of layoff. This was a company-wide layoff of senior personnel: managers, directors, and a vice president, 31 in total. The reason given was poor corporate financial performance.

At age 61, it was hard for my husband to find a comparable position in our area or even in Oregon. He was finally able to secure a couple of year-long contract positions that utilized his technical expertise and then a brief consulting job.

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. Currently, 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,

Nancy Brown

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