

Sarah DeMerritt
Lake Oswego, OR
romeytheb@icloud.com

To: Senate Judiciary Committee

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Chair Barker, Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. My name is Sarah DeMerritt and I am here in support of Senate Bill 1546.

I spent ten years working more than ten years working as a clerk in the same store – always knowing that one error could cost me my job and possibly my career. On Thursday, June 27, 2013, it happened.

I arrived at work at 3:30pm and worked in the bakery until 6:30pm. After taking my lunch, I began covering a check stand. The store was very busy and for most of the evening, I was the only checker.

At approximately 8:20pm, the store had become increasingly busy and I had a large line despite calling for back up. I had worked in this store for over 12 years and know many of the customers by name or on sight. I have developed a good rapport with them and feel comfortable waiting on my many friends and neighbors.

As I rang up a customer at approximately 8:20pm, I glanced up, recognized a neighbor from up the street and checked out his package of diapers and a six-pack of beer.

Immediately after this customer left my line the next person in line showed me her badge and identified herself as an OLCC agent. She said I had just failed an alcohol sting by selling alcohol to a minor.

I was interviewed and processed by a Lake Oswego Police Officer in check stand #1. Because the store was so busy my coworker was not able to leave her check stand to allow us privacy in the office. The officer read me my rights and cited me in the check stand while my customers were still trying to get in line. I was charged with a Class A Misdemeanor.

I stated in my interview with the police that I thought the customer looked old enough to purchase alcohol based on my thought that he was a familiar neighbor that I had carded and sold alcohol to in the past.

I have had extensive training in selling alcohol and had passed several OLCC and Safeway company stings in the past. I've denied sales throughout my career. I take my responsibility to keep alcohol out of the hands of minors very seriously. Why would I risk my health benefits, my job, my life, my seniority? In this case, I thought I had recognized a familiar customer and sold him the alcohol without asking for his ID.

An hour and twenty minutes after my arrest I was asked to shut down my check stand and leave the store. My career at Safeway was over.

I fought my charge. This was an unknowing and unintentional sale. I knew with a criminal conviction I would not work again in my field. I was appointed a public defender. I contacted my Senator, Richard Devlin, to see how he could help. I spent months fighting – no one should have to go through this.

I urge you to pass Senate Bill 1546. I have fought hard against this and do not want other employees to have this experience. I do not want them to have to fight so hard. Please support this bill.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. I am very grateful that you are considering this issue.

Sarah DeMerritt