

AARP Oregon Testimony on HB 2807

May 24th, 2017

TO: Senate Committee on Judiciary, Sen. Prozanski, Chair

FROM: Jon Bartholomew, Government Relations Director, AARP Oregon

AARP Oregon supports House Bill 2807 with the –A7 amendment, because it will provide seniors who have been abused or neglected and other injured Oregonians the access to a jury trial based on the facts of their case. Seniors can fall victim to many predatory practices because as people age, they become less likely to be able to defend themselves from abuse and neglect.

The effects that abuse can have on seniors are devastating. The damage can be physical and emotional. The ability to physically perform daily activities of daily living can be impaired, and their sense of safety can be destroyed. The trauma that elder abuse has on families is enormous. House Bill 2807 will give them a chance to have their case heard by a jury and let that panel of twelve ordinary Oregonians determine what fair compensation is for the pain that will change a family forever, with some limitations.

Damages for pain and suffering are often the only compensation a retiree can receive. For instance, a retired person has no lost wages to be compensated and so would be eligible for minimal compensation for economic loss.

AARP has a long history of working on this issue. We opposed Measure 81 in 2000, which would have re-imposed compensation caps for severely injured or abused Oregonians. Voters agreed by a 70-30 margin that juries should have the power to make these decisions. Voters spoke again on this issue by defeating Measure 35 in 2004. Since 1999, the system worked well, and HB 2807 moves toward restoring this system of justice for severely injured or traumatized Oregonians.

HB 2807 allows for a severely abused senior to get the access to justice they deserve. AARP Oregon urges you to support HB 2807 with the –A7 amendment.