

TO CHAIR BARKER AND THE MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE BUSINESS AND LABOR COMMITTEE
FROM: Catharine Hojem, Member of the American Association of University Women of Oregon
RE: Support for House Bill 2818

I write this in support of House Bill 2818.

Older employees bring proven job and leadership experience to their chosen occupations but are frequently met with barriers based on age discrimination. These barriers include not getting hired for a job they applied for because of their age, being passed up for a promotion or another chance to get ahead, or being subjected to negative remarks from colleagues or supervisors.

Discrimination based on age takes on a familiar characteristic of discrimination based on gender — in the latter case, women are told they are taking jobs from men, in the present case, experienced workers who are still able to do their job are told they are taking jobs from younger people. It isn't that older workers or women want to take jobs from anyone. They just want to do their job and be productive, respected members of society.

Right now, if employers can identify a reason other than age to justify their negative employment decision, even though age may be a factor, or the primary factor, in the decision, aggrieved employees can't prevail in court.

Unfortunately, many in the workplace believe it is okay to make jokes about older workers. This is just not right.

This bill makes sure that employers don't screen out older workers before they are interviewed and strengthens non-discrimination laws based on age.

I urge you to support House Bill 2818.

Respectfully,

Catharine Hojem
Oregon City, Oregon