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RE: House Bill 4076

Chair Barker and members of the committee:

For the record my name is Carla Piluso and I proudly represent House District 50, the great city of Gresham.

This bill is one step towards addressing an issue that harming many Oregonians. This committee has heard it before: age discrimination in the workplace is pervasive, and it shows up in many forms. There are the layoffs that target older employees. There are the workers who are passed over for a promotion because it's assumed they are going to retire soon anyways. There are the job ads that request "digital natives," implying that older workers need not apply.

We need to address this problem because it's unfair to older workers—but also because it impacts the economic health of our state. When older workers are discriminated against, they can't save as much for retirement and are more reliant on social services. They are less able to support their families. And our economy misses out on the skills and experience older employees have to offer. As the Oregon Legislature knows too well, older people can still get a lot done.

As you know, most businesses do their best to treat their workers fairly—and age discrimination is already illegal in Oregon. But we need to discuss why it is so hard to enforce the law and ensure that workers are treated fairly.

Last session, we took a shot at addressing some of these issues with House Bill 2818. What became clear is that this issue requires more structured discussion than was possible during the session. That's why we are bringing you this task force bill today. My hope is that this task force will be able to discuss the issues and agree on a way forward in time for the 2021 session. We chose to keep the membership of the task force fairly small and nimble.

I see this process as an opportunity to meaningfully incorporate the voices of those most affected by these issues: working and retired seniors, as well as the employers who must implement these changes on the ground. One purpose of this task force is to welcome the contributions, testimony, and perspectives of a diversity of advocates who represent older workers and businesses—and use those contributions to make better policy in the end.

Sincerely,

Carla C. Piluso
Oregon State Representative, House District 50