

Chair Barker and members of the committee:

On behalf of the Oregon Law Center (OLC), I respectfully request your support for HB 4076 to create a taskforce on age discrimination.

OLC's mission is to achieve justice for low-income communities of Oregon by providing a full range of the highest quality civil legal services. The vast majority of our clients have incomes at or below the federal poverty level, and work hard to provide the basic necessities for themselves and their family. Despite Oregon's recent economic recovery, many vulnerable low-income people continue to struggle to make ends meet. Oregon's housing crisis has exacerbated the challenges for our low-income community, and an increasing number of our clients are forced to make terrible choices between paying for rent, food, medicine, or other necessities.

HB 4076 creates a Task Force on Age Discrimination that will be charged with identifying and evaluating the impacts of age discrimination in the workplace and establishing policy recommendations to prevent it. Representatives of older workers, business and advocates will all be included and able to provide input on the outcome of the taskforce.

Stable employment is one protection against falling into crisis. Our seniors are especially vulnerable – nationally, an increasing number of seniors are aging into poverty and homelessness. This trajectory impacts women and people of color disproportionately. There is no place for age discrimination as a barrier to employment for older Oregonians who are capable of and seeking work. HB 4076 will help create a solution to remove barriers, to ensure that our state's older populations do not face discrimination in seeking or maintaining employment.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony. OLC urges your support for HB 4112.