



February 2, 2023

RE: Testimony in Support of House Bill 2800

Dear Chair Holvey and Members of the House Business & Labor Committee,

We write to urge passage of House Bill 2800. It is a win/win. This Bill is needed to support the financial stability of older Oregonians and will help address Oregon's workforce crisis. We believe HB 2800 clarifies current law with reasonable and measured guidance to courts and employers. The result will be more creative, productive intergenerational workplaces.

AGE+ is a statewide 501(c)3 that empowers communities of all ages to value the contributions of older Oregonians and to address the needs of those who are isolated, lower income and underserved.

Ageism in the workplace is holding us back. Older workers are vital to the economic well-being of our state. Across Oregon, employers have more job openings than applicants. At the same time, Oregon's workforce is aging rapidly—faster than younger workers are coming online. Right now, in some fields, retaining older workers is not an asset but a necessity:

- 26% of Oregon's manufacturing workforce is over 55 years old;
- 24% of health care and social assistance workers are over 55 years old.

Smart state policy, law and employer guidance should align with business to incentivize older workers to stay on the job. Oregon's most recent Talent Assessment (2022) highlights the shift in demographics as a top challenge to Oregon's economic future:

"Business and elected leaders could mitigate this challenge with intentional policy and actions focused on older workers. Businesses have become aware of the need to create more-inclusive work environments. Efforts toward racial, ethnic, and gender inclusivity could be extended to age-related workplace issues."

Oregon cannot afford misconceptions about older workers. HB 2800 leads the way to a stronger, deeper, more inclusive workforce in Oregon that will benefit everyone.

The good news: People are living longer and either want or need to continue working. Providing older workers with basic protections against age discrimination will help ensure they have access to incomes, incomes they will spend, invest and pay taxes on.

Finally, HB 2800 will help Oregon live up to the promise of equity for all.

When older workers are discriminated against, everyone is affected. Age discrimination negatively affects the lives of not only individual workers but also their families, communities and the broader economy.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Hooper, President