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**Testimony in support of SB 5515**

Joint Committee on Ways & Means: Subcommittee on Transportation & Economic Development

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AARP is the nation's largest nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to empowering Americans 50 and older to choose how they live as they age. With over 38 million nationwide and 500,000 members in Oregon, AARP works to strengthen communities and advocate for what matters most to families, with a focus on health security, financial stability and personal fulfillment.

A priority for us this session is around financial resilience and addressing the significant barriers older Oregonians face in the workplace around age discrimination. That's why AARP along with almost two dozen allied organizations has introduced HB 2800 to fix the workplace age discrimination law. I won't go into details here; the bill is being heard in House Business & Labor. But we are here today to support Bureau of Labor & Industries' (BOLI's) request for funding, specifically staffing for the Civil Rights division which enforces discrimination claims, including age discrimination.

We know that in Oregon we have a problem with workplace age discrimination. AARP research shows that 62% of Oregonians 40 and older who are working or looking for work, reported that they have seen or experienced age discrimination in the workplace. Older workers are part of solving the workforce shortage but face stereotyping and age-bias.

As BOLI has testified, there is a backlog of complaints and the necessary resources to support the critical work of investigating and resolving discrimination complaints. BOLI plays a critical role when it comes to ensuring protections for all Oregonians against any form of discrimination. Timely investigations and resolutions to all discrimination claims is important to *both* employees and employers.

As we advocate for fixing our age discrimination law, we also urge this committee as it moves forward this session with budgets, to support fully funding BOLI to allow them to continue their critical role in protecting Oregonians from workplace discrimination laws.