

Testimony in Support of HB 3187
By Wendy Lebow

I am a retired Career Coach who worked at the Gresham WorkSource office until mid-2019. WorkSource is the public agency who helps people get jobs and helps employers get workers.

As a career coach, I regularly mentored job seekers in how to apply and interview for jobs in the industries of technology and advanced manufacturing. Many of the job seekers were older, and had received updated training in their field. For the most part, they were experienced workers with excellent track records, and had much to offer in their industries.

We found that our older job seekers, though qualified and with a quality application, would usually not receive a response. Then, if they did get an interview, they would have trouble being taken seriously. For instance, one older worker, who had extensive, specialized technical skills. The interviewee said with a cool demeanor, "You remind me of my father." Needless to say, he did not get the job.

Many older job seekers seemed to experience coded language for "too old." Most frequently they were told they were "overqualified." Even when the job candidate explained specifically the reasons the job was a perfect fit, they felt they had already been dismissed because of their age.

These stereotypes about older job seekers and workers was a given. We (career coaches) often encouraged women to color their gray hair; and counseled everyone in dress and presentation. In spite of everything, few could break through the age barriers to really get themselves seen as skilled contributors.

This legislation will help level the playing field. It would be very helpful to older job seekers, who often have so much to offer, to have their skills and experiences fairly considered with other job candidates.

Thank you.