

Intro with core story: Identity

As a member of the board of Colorado's Women Lobby, and an individual who has had contact with thousands of older Coloradans over the last three years, I want to share my support for SB21-176, and specifically the provision that strengthens our age discrimination laws.

Explanation: Stories and Statistics

In the course of traveling around the state, and meeting people virtually this year, I've heard from so many older Coloradans who have experienced age discrimination at work. Here are just a few:

- I've heard from people like 69-year old Betsy in Colorado Springs who shared that she was unemployed and two months from being evicted.
- I met with a group of women my age in Mesa County who were trying to get by on \$500/month of social security and could not get a job despite the fact that there were help wanted signs all over town.
- I heard from a former colleague in Denver who had not been able to find work in over a year, despite being a skilled fundraiser.
- I talked to a sixth grader who told me his grandma was "really sad" since being laid off and replaced by someone younger.

Their stories are not isolated. A 2020 survey of Coloradans age 50 and over found:

- 53% had their work status negatively affected by the pandemic
- 50% currently looking for work
- One-third reported experiencing age discrimination, and 40% were not sure.

National statistics from AARP show that 61% of Americans age 45 and over have either experienced or witnessed age discrimination in the workplace, and The Urban Institute found that 56% of people entering their 50s with stable employment were either pushed out or laid off, and only 10% ever recouped financially. Women, people of color, and workers in low wage job are especially adversely affected by age discrimination.

Older workers are the fastest growing segment of Colorado's workforce. It hurts not only older Coloradans and their families, but also the state's economy when older workers are pushed out.

Solutions (with justice value layered in)

It's time that age discrimination is treated the same way as other forms of workplace discrimination, and for Colorado to ensure that older workers can use their strengths and talents to benefit our communities and the economy. It's time to live up to the pledge on the Colorado State website: *to foster an economy that works for everyone and protect what makes Colorado the best state in the country to live, work, start a business, raise a family, and retire.*