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My name is Rochelle Gimenez, Ph.D., (shelly.gimenez@gmail.com) and I am from Willimantic. I am the mother of 4 and grandmother of 10. I am 79 years old and still working which is why I cannot be here in person today. I am testifying in support of S.B. 56 An Act Deterring Age Discrimination in Employment Applications.

My situation is unusual in that I personally benefited from the fact that I returned to college relatively late in life, and therefore, my graduation dates made it appear that I was much younger than in fact I was. I was 45 when I got my BA, 48 when I got my master's degree and 54 when I got my doctorate. Had my graduation dates suggested my actual age, I do not believe I would have gotten the kind of career opportunities that I had, due to age bias that exists in our society. If I had been forced to reveal my actual age when applying for jobs in higher education in my 50's and 60's, I am pretty sure that I would not have been considered. In fact, I obtained my first dean's position at age 55, but my graduation dates which I did not have to disclose, made it look like I was in my 30's.

Today, at age 79, I am still working. I retired at age 72 from my administrative career at a Connecticut university. But because I was known there, I was able to move into a part-time teaching position and I continue to teach two courses per semester. However, I ask you, how many people walking in the door at age 72 would be offered a teaching position or a tenure-track faculty position? I can assure you it would be zero.

Why, you might ask, would someone like me, having had a successful professional academic career choose to keep working? You probably assume that I have a comfortable retirement income but sadly that is not the case. Why? When I was "college age" I was a single mom with four children working multiple jobs just to pay the bills. I had to make them my highest priority. When I was able to return to school at age 39, I was completely dependent on student financial aid. You may laugh when I say that I paid off my last student loan with my first Social Security check, but that is the truth!

Now, like many seniors, I must juggle priorities to make ends meet. I rarely eat in restaurants or can afford to entertain. My highest priority now is my passion for traveling, which I hope to be able to resume in the near future, but I can only afford to travel by continuing to work. I am fortunate to have been able to retain employment in higher education. It is no mystery to me why seniors have to seek employment in order to have a good quality of life. As working seniors, we are consumers, we are tax payers and we contribute to our communities in many important ways. If we are not able to work, we would only be subsisting, barely contributing to Connecticut's economy. It is interesting to note that currently the economic activity of people age 50 and over in the U. S. is estimated at \$8.3 trillion dollars, equivalent to the third largest economy in the world!!

The reason I am testifying today is that I want people to have the same opportunity that I have had to continue working and thus contributing to our society and to the State of Connecticut. Older workers are actually critical to the current economy, especially in Connecticut which is the 6th "oldest" state in the nation. The motivations of older adults who want to work are often very different from those of younger individuals looking to build a career. Many seniors are willing to take part-time or contract jobs because they don't want to work full-time and they may not need to have benefits. Sadly perhaps, our economy is more and more dependent on such workers.

Especially in the early stages of recruiting employees, decisions should be based upon skills and experience not upon age. We need to guard against making pre-judgments that a person is too old to do the job or not willing to take a job because they are "over qualified." People are living longer more active lives and increasingly they will need to work in order to maintain a reasonable life style. And Connecticut needs older workers in order to maintain and enhance a vibrant economy.

S.B. 56 will help to ensure that the best applicant on paper progresses to an interview without consideration of age. Like me, they will be able to advocate for themselves in person without pre-judgment. I implore you to support S.B. 56. It's only fair!!

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