

Aging Committee

Public Testimony of the Connecticut Women's Education and Legal Fund (CWEALF)

S.B. 56: An Act Deterring Age Discrimination in Employment Applications

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The Connecticut Women's Education and Legal Fund (CWEALF) is a statewide, nonprofit organization that advocates for and empowers women and girls in Connecticut, especially those who are underserved or marginalized. For forty-seven years, CWEALF has been a leading advocate of policy solutions that enhance women's economic security and combat discrimination.

CWEALF encourages the Committee to support Senate Bill No. 56: *An Act Deterring Age Discrimination in Employment Applications*, which will prohibit employers from asking a job candidate about their age, date of birth, or dates of attendance or graduation from educational institutions.

Older women, especially older women of color, are more likely to experience poverty than their male counterparts. Currently, 9.3% of women age 65 and older in Connecticut live in poverty.¹ Protections against age discrimination will ensure the economic security of the growing population of older women in Connecticut.

Nationally, despite support from social programs including Social Security, Supplemental Security Income and others, nearly two-thirds of the older population in poverty are women.² Older women of color experience poverty at almost double the rate of older white women.³ While the poverty rate for older white women is 12.8%, the rate for older Native American women is 23.4%, for older black women is 25.2%, and for older Hispanic women is 26.1%.⁴

¹ National Women's Law Center. Retrieved from: <https://nwlc.org/state/connecticut/>

² National Women's Law Center, *Poverty Rate Falls but Being a Woman Increases the Odds of Being Poor in America, the Wage Gap Remains Stalled, and Uninsurance Among Women Dropped by 37 Percent under the ACA*, (Accessed September 17, 2017)

<https://nwlc.org/press-releases/poverty-rate-falls-but-being-a-woman-increases-the-odds-of-being-poor-in-america-the-wage-gap-remains-stalled-and-uninsurance-among-women-dropped-by-37-percent-under-the-aca/>.

³ See note ii.

⁴ See note ii.

Marital status also affects whether older women experience poverty, as married couples are more likely to obtain benefits from their spouse.⁵ Unmarried women experience poverty at over five times the rate of married women.⁶ Age discrimination in employment prevents older unmarried women experiencing poverty from achieving self-sufficiency and providing for themselves and their families.

By prohibiting employers from asking an applicant's age, S.B. 56 will support older women to obtain higher paying jobs to lift themselves and their families out of poverty. CWEALF urges the Committee to support Senate Bill No. 56: An Act Deterring Age Discrimination in Employment Applications. Lawmakers must advance the economic security of older women in Connecticut, especially older women of color, in obtaining and maintaining sufficient employment.

⁵ See note ii.

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