

Testimony from Kippie Martin
In Support of SB 56, *An Act Deterring Age Discrimination in Employment Applications*
Aging Committee
February 9, 2021

Senator Slap, Representative Phipps, and Members of the Aging Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to share my support for SB 56, An Act Deterring Age Discrimination in Employment Applications. I experienced age discrimination in the interview process for employment after being laid off as an older adult and beginning the job submission process at the age of 47. After years of submitting applications for full time permanent jobs and receiving no calls for interviews, I was told to remove anything related to age from my applications. The approach worked and I started to get interviews however, I would soon realize that age discrimination can happen in the interview process and others should be aware of this when answering questions. Employers are using discreetly disguised questions starting in the interview process to reveal one's age and thus eliminating older workers from getting hired.

Turning 50 meant acknowledging I had embarked my half century mark. For some this is daunting but for me it meant reflecting on some of the milestones I had achieved with obtaining a Master's degree, writing a book, putting kids through college, and having a family I adored. I was ready to embrace what the years after 50 would bring with grandchildren, dreams of performing on the MOTH, a new career, and receiving my AARP card. You see, I wasn't finished with achieving things in life so I began to create a to do list as a new member of the 50 and over club. I prepared for my future endeavors by speaking to friends about career possibilities and reading literature to branch myself into another job. I began submitting job applications but it seemed like I was not getting any responses until I took the advice from my son, a recent graduate from Williams College who said, "mom, take everything off your resume which reflects your age. It's evident you are qualified for these jobs, but people are probably not calling you because of this." I followed his advice and all of sudden I began to get interviews and it felt great. However, I would soon find out employers have other ways to ask questions which tend to reveal one's age, and this was never more evident than during my phone interview with the dean of a private college. I knew I was well-prepared for the interview and that my skills aligned with the job description, but the interview took a different turn when the dean asked me when I graduated from Teacher's College with my degree in Instructional Technology. I immediately thought to myself the question had nothing to do with the job. I could feel myself slipping down in my chair when I slowly answered "nineteen ninety three." His immediate response was "wow!" Upon hearing his reaction, I put my head down, only lifting it up to finish the interview. As an African American woman and military spouse I had experienced discrimination on different levels, but ageism was something I had only read about in an AARP magazine. Blindsided that an institution of higher education would ask a question relating to age, I realize age discrimination can occur anyplace. Ageism is seemingly more apparent than I had realized; I had experienced it firsthand. It is a formidable hurdle, if not a wall, many Americans over 50 will face when applying for jobs.