



April 26, 2017

TO: Senator Kathleen Taylor, Chair  
Senate Committee on Workforce  
FR: Bob Joondeph, Executive Director  
RE: HB 2005A

Thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of HB 2005A which will further economic self-sufficiency by Oregonians with disabilities.

Pay inequity, among other factors, have created a tilted playing field for individuals with disabilities who are ready, willing and able to work. The data show that people who have additional challenges in their lives must also overcome false stereotypes, fears and misapprehensions that hold them back from leading lives of full integration and self-sufficiency. As the data set out below and in the accompanying study demonstrate, Oregonians with disabilities need the protection of HB 2005A.

Included with this testimony is a 2015 report from the American Institutes for Research entitled: *An Uneven Playing Field: The Lack of Equal Pay for People With Disabilities*. The report asks the question whether educational attainment leads to the same degree of success for workers with disabilities and their nondisabled peers. It finds that an earnings gap exists at all education levels and widens as the both groups climb the educational ladder. The findings are based on data from the U.S. Census Bureau's 2011 American Community Survey.

Key findings include:

- Workers with disabilities who have at least a high school education earn 37 percent less on average than their peers without disabilities, a disparity costing federal and state governments up to \$31.5 billion in potential tax revenue.
- Earnings disparities increase with higher educational attainment. Among workers with a high school degree or the equivalent, those with disabilities earned on average \$6,505 less than their peers in 2011. The gap widens to nearly \$21,000 on average among those with a master's or more advanced degree. Employees with disabilities face economic discrimination similar to what female employees experience; they get 37 percent less pay compared with 35 percent for women.
- According to the authors, Michelle Yin and Dahlia Shaewitz: "Although non-discriminatory compensation is protected through the Civil Rights, Americans with Disabilities, and Rehabilitation Acts, our results show that earnings inequalities are

gaping, Education and employment are not enough. Equal pay is key to keeping people with disabilities economically independent and out of poverty.”

The data demonstrate the problem:

- Employment rate for those with disabilities: 27 For those without disabilities: 65
- Cents workers with disabilities earn for every dollar their non-disabled colleagues make: 64
- Percent of workers with disabilities with a high-school or an equivalent degree: 31 Of non-disabled workers: 20
- Percent of workers with disabilities with a bachelor’s degree: 7 Of non-disabled workers: 13
- Percent of workers with disabilities with a master’s degree or higher: 3 Of non-disabled workers: 8
- Average fewer dollars a disabled worker with a high school or an equivalent degree earns a year, compared with their peers: 6,505
- Average fewer dollars a disabled worker with a bachelor’s degree earns a year, compared with their peers: 12,719
- Average fewer dollars for those with a master’s degree or higher: 20,871

According to Bureau of Labor Statistics report *Persons with a Disability: Labor Force Characteristics*, June 21, 2016:

- The unemployment rate for persons with a disability was 10.7 percent in 2015, about twice that of those with no disability (5.1 percent). (Unemployed persons are those who did not have a job, were available for work, and were actively looking for a job in the 4 weeks preceding the survey.)
- Among persons with a disability, the unemployment rates were similar for men and women in 2015 (10.6 percent and 10.8 percent, respectively). The rates for both men and women declined in 2015. Among the major race and ethnicity groups, the jobless rates for Whites, Blacks, and Hispanics were down over the year, while the rate for Asians showed little change. As is the case among persons without a disability, the jobless rate for those with a disability was higher among Blacks (17.4 percent) and Hispanics (13.3 per-cent) than among Whites (9.6 percent) and Asians (7.4 percent).

Also according the US Bureau of Labor Statistics:

- In August 2015, about 4.3 million veterans, or 20 percent of all veterans, had a service-connected disability.
- The employment-population ratio, or number of employed people as a percentage of the civilian noninstitutional population age 18 and older, for all veterans was 47.8 percent.

- The employment-population ratio of veterans with a service-connected disability (43.3 percent) was lower than the employment-population ratio for veterans without a service-connected disability (49.0 percent).

According to the National ADA Center, the employment rate of veterans with disabilities is significantly lower than that of veterans without disabilities. “Only about a third of veterans who report both a Service Connected and nonservice disability (32%) and only 37% of those reporting only a nonservice disability are employed, compared with over three-quarters of veterans without disabilities. As a comparison, the overall employment rate of the civilian population is 71%.” <https://adata.org/factsheet/employment-data-veterans-disabilities>

Those who experience disabilities including those who have served our country deserve equal pay for equal work. This is why DRO supports HB 2005.