



TO: Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Capital Construction

FROM: Jordan Truitt

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RE: Written testimony in support of Capital Construction Funding request

Co-Chair's Girod & Holvey and members of the committee,

My name is Jordan Truitt, incoming Chair of the United Way Board, fourth generation food processor, commercial real estate broker, native Salemite, father to three young children and former Council Member of the Energy Facility Siting Council. We are here in support of our funding request for Cottages United; a first of its kind housing development, devoted entirely to seniors on a fixed income. Phase I of our cottage community is nearing completion of the first 10 single family units, designed, and built right here in Salem Oregon, using City of Salem surplus land. With additional funding, phases II and III can soon become a reality, using our replicable design that went from "proof of concept" to 10 new affordable structures, with 15 more planned, for seniors on the brink of becoming houseless.

I'm joined by Melinda Freshour, Community Relations Director at United Way who will share one of the many, first-hand accounts, of how critical our concept has become to a vastly under recognized, and at-risk community, we aim to serve.

Thank you Jordan and thank you committee for allowing me to share the impact of our project, Cottages United. This project really began 5 years ago when we realized our senior population was struggling to find affordable housing and support. Over the last 2 years this only became a more rapidly growing issue with time running out. As we interviewed seniors to hear their stories, understand their situations and plan the best ways to come alongside them, Cottages United took shape. I'd like to read to you one of those interview accounts from a man named Fritz, who continues to face a very uncertain season of life.

Not only would Fritz benefit from calling one of our cottages home, he will be given an opportunity to build community with others. We have a unique partnership with the local elementary school located right in front of our cottages. Our goal is to connect our cottage seniors with staff and students at this school by providing reading support, hallway and recess monitoring and community garden areas.

This is a beloved generation that often feel isolated and forgotten. Cottages United provides a home that most seniors, like Fritz, can age in place with dignity.



Jordan Talking Points:

- The pioneering mission dedicated to seniors on a fixed income.
 - As homelessness become increasing prevalent on our streets, many go unseen.
 - Seniors can be out of sight, out of mind, and often left with no support or family.
- Target demographic stats:
 - 2023 PIT count, 29% of 1,488 identified were over the age of 50.
 - 63% of adults, age 55 and over have an earned income below \$35,000/yr.
 - In the past 30-years, homelessness of people 55+ has jumped from 11% to 50%.
 - Nearly ¾ of extremely low-income renters devote 50% of income for housing.
 - In 2023, average Social Security benefit was \$1,782/mo.
 - Average rent in Salem is between \$1,100 - \$1,400/mo.
 - Salem vacancies are below the national average.
- The barriers
 - Financial insecurity is the greatest barrier to stable housing, with significant health impacts.
- The model
 - To create an affordable solution using a historically effective, cottage cluster model.
 - Create a “Proof of Concept” that meets financial objectives while being easily replicated.
- The demand
 - Long before permitting, approval and construction, applications came pouring in.
 - Many at risk seniors live alone or with a spouse and have little to no support network.
 - Our solution is to provide a community.
- The success
 - Line of applicants, built on budget and a true private/public success story.
- The true potential
 - We have land for expansion, the experience, a blueprint for success and if funded, the builder could start phase II tomorrow.

We strongly encourage you to provide funding for this project, but more than that, we implore you to take a deeper look at what UW has been able to accomplish, and how this public/private partnership, armed with the right resources, can expand our model into communities throughout our fine state.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. We are happy to address any questions you may have.

