

County Commissioners  
Kevin Cameron, Chair  
Danielle Bethell  
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Chief Administrative  
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Jan Fritz

## MARION COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

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February 16, 2024

Senator Fred Girod, Co-Chair  
Representative Paul Holvey, Co-Chair  
Members of the Committee

**Subject: Marion County Commissioner Kevin Cameron Supports Funding for the Cottage United Project**

As a board member of the United Way of the Mid-Willamette Valley and Marion County Commissioner, I am writing to express my strong support for the funding of the United Way of the Mid-Willamette Valley's Cottages United Project. This initiative, targeted at seniors aged 55 and above, is a vital step towards addressing the pressing need for affordable housing for seniors in the Salem-Keizer area.

The Cottages United Project aims to provide 25 low-income cottages with a maximum monthly rent of \$500. These cottages will not only meet building, energy, and ADA standards but also contribute to the revitalization of the neighborhoods in which they are located. They also have the potential to serve as a replicable model for addressing affordable housing needs across our city, county, and state.

The need for affordable housing for seniors in Salem/Keizer cannot be overstated. According to the 2023 Point-in-Time count, Salem had 1488 homeless individuals, with 429 aged 50 and over—the largest group in this count. Moreover, financial insecurity among older adults is a significant barrier to stable housing, with 63% of individuals aged 55 and above earning less than \$35,000 a year.

As a Marion County Commissioner, I have seen firsthand the impact of homelessness on our community. Affordable housing is a critical component of addressing homelessness in our state, and initiatives like the Cottages United Project represent tangible steps towards providing sustainable solutions.

The United Way of the Mid-Willamette Valley has demonstrated its commitment to serving our community's needs, including the need for more low-barrier shelter space. I believe that supporting the Cottages United Project is not only a wise investment in addressing senior homelessness but also a testament to our collective dedication to creating a more equitable and compassionate society.

I urge your support for funding for the United Way of the Mid-Willamette Valley's Cottages United Project. By doing so, we can make a meaningful difference in the lives of seniors in our community and pave the way for innovative solutions to housing insecurity.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kevin Cameron". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Kevin Cameron  
Marion County Commissioner