

February 10, 2025 Legislative Testimony

Senate Committee On Housing and Development

Meeting Details 02/10/2025 1:00 PM, HR E

Senator - Khanh Pham, Chair

Derenda Schubert, PhD

Chair Pham and members of the committee,

My name is Dr. Derenda Schubert, and I am the Executive Director of Bridge Meadows. Today, I am here to urge you to support of SB 229. Bridge Meadows creates intergenerational communities that provide stable housing and supportive services to families impacted by foster care and elders who serve as caring neighbors. Our mission is to ensure that youth affected by foster care have permanent family connections, whether through reunification, adoption, or legal guardianship.

At Bridge Meadows, we bring together families who have been reunited or who are fostering children, alongside elders over the age of 55. Together, they create a village of support—truly embodying the saying that "It takes a village to raise a child."

Each of our communities is supported by a full-time Master's level mental health specialist, ensuring that behavioral health services are integrated into the fabric of our care. This holistic approach to housing and support leads to long-term family stability. Youth in our communities receive the security of a permanent family and graduate from high school, often going on to higher education and becoming contributing members of society. In fact, one of our youth recently earned a full-ride scholarship to college, and many families have gone on to purchase their own homes.

Bridge Meadows addresses several critical social issues simultaneously—housing, child welfare, and elder care. For every child placed in a permanent family at Bridge Meadows, we save the human services system \$439,000 annually in foster care payments. To date, we have saved \$35 million in foster care payments. Furthermore, the 80 youth currently living at Bridge Meadows under adoption or legal guardianship represent a potential lifetime savings of \$24 million in foster care costs.

Elders living at Bridge Meadows also experience improved health and well-being, leading to significant cost savings to the medical system by aging in place and avoiding costly institutional care. They thrive in a familiar environment, contributing meaningfully to the community.

Our model works, and it saves the system money while improving the lives of children, families, and elders. The funding in SB 229 will allow us to bring this transformative model to more cities in Oregon, including Eugene and Milwaukie.

We have been invited to expand, and with your support, we will be able to meet the needs of more Oregonians, helping to create communities where every individual experiences well-being, belonging, and purpose. As Former U.S. Surgeon General Dr. Vivek Murthy said, we must build communities that foster these values. Bridge Meadows is a prescription for Oregon's health and resilience.

Thank you for your time and consideration.