

February 15, 2024

Senator Fred Girod, Co-Chair  
Representative Paul Holvey, Co-Chair  
Joint Committee on Ways & Means Subcommittee on Capital Construction  
900 Court Street NE  
Salem OR 97301

Dear Co-Chairs Girod and Holvey and Members of the Committee:

I am writing to voice my support for the funding of the United Way of the Mid-Willamette Valley Cottages United Project. **For seniors, affordable housing is a critical need in Salem/Keizer.** Our project, aimed at seniors, 55 and up, will bring 25 low-income cottages to the Salem-Keizer area. These cottages will have a maximum monthly rent of \$500.00, meet building, energy and ADA standards, serve to revitalize the neighborhood and provide these seniors with a community to belong to. In addition, this ground-breaking model has the potential to be replicated in our city, county and state.

- According to the 2023 PIT count, Salem had 1488 homeless individuals. Of that, 429 were age 50 and over. This was the largest group in this count.
- 63% of older adults, 55 and up, have an earned income below \$35,000 a year.
- In the past 30 years, the number of people 55 and older experiencing homelessness has jumped from 11% to 50%.
- In 2023 the average social security benefit was \$1782 per month.
- The average rent in Salem is between \$1100-\$1400 per month.
- For older adults, financial insecurity is a barrier to stable housing and house instability significantly impacts health.

The need for affordable housing for seniors is one part of a bigger approach to addressing homelessness in our state.

As a Board member of UWMWV I fully support and engage on our commitment to serving the community needs. One of these needs is the need for more low barrier shelter space for our seniors.

I respectfully request that you approve funding for the United Way of the Mid-Willamette Cottages United project. This funding will create a real-world solution to our senior homelessness issue and create a long-term replicable project.

Sincerely,



Lesa Goff

SVP, Bank of the Pacific