



"Providing Hope and Healing in our community."

Steven Jensen, CEO
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1/22/2025

The Honorable Members
Joint Committee on Ways and Means
Subcommittee on Public Safety

Dear Members of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Public Safety,

I am writing to you as the CEO of Lifeways, Inc., a nonprofit agency and Community Mental Health Provider providing behavioral health and substance use disorder treatment in Malheur County, and a dedicated advocate for the betterment of our community. I am fully aware of the importance of a courthouse that not only upholds justice but also serves the people in a safe, accessible, and efficient manner. For far too long, the Malheur County Courthouse has struggled to meet these essential needs, and I am requesting your urgent support in securing legislative funding for a new courthouse that will serve as a vital resource for our community.

As you may know, our courthouse is outdated, overcrowded, and lacks the facilities required to support the growing population of Malheur County. A deficient courthouse directly impacts our clients, many of whom rely on the court system for cases involving family law, criminal matters, and involuntary treatment hearings. Delays in case processing, an unsafe or stressful environment, and inadequate security measures could worsen the already difficult experience for individuals in behavioral health and substance use disorder recovery. For rural residents, the lack of a modern facility also creates additional barriers to accessing justice, with long travel distances and logistical challenges. Moreover, an outdated courthouse limits our ability to coordinate effectively with local treatment providers, reducing the chances for clients to receive the holistic support they need. A new courthouse would provide a safer, more efficient space for legal proceedings, ensuring that all individuals, especially those in vulnerable situations, can access timely, fair, and effective justice.

A new courthouse will directly benefit both the people of Malheur County and the organizations that rely on it. For instance, our local law enforcement, legal professionals, and social service organizations face significant challenges in working within the current facility. A modern courthouse will enable faster processing of cases, improve public safety, and provide a more comfortable environment for all those involved in legal proceedings. Furthermore, it will enhance access to justice for rural residents who must travel long distances for court-related matters, as it will offer the space and resources to accommodate these needs more effectively.

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I ask for your support in securing legislative funding for this project, which will help ensure that the people of Malheur County receive the justice they deserve in a facility that reflects our community's needs and values. I hope that you will join us in advocating for this critical investment in our future.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. Your support in securing the necessary planning funds will make a tremendous difference in ensuring that Malheur County has the courthouse it urgently needs.

Sincerely,



Steven Jensen, CEO
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