

HB3589 Testimony
2025

Thank you, Chair Marsh, Vice-Chairs Anderson and Breese-Iverson, and Members of the Committee:

For the record my name is Brandy Penner (she/her), I am the Program Manager for Friendly House Elder Pride Services.

I am here today to speak about the importance of creating affordable, accessible and safe older adult housing. In April of 2024 Elder Pride Services helped opened the first in the state LGBTQ+ older adult affordable housing. The Opal is a beautiful example of what can be accomplished when a variety of strategic partners come together. This building would not be standing if it weren't for a faith-based community and a developer with a shared commitment and tenacity teaming up to create culturally specific housing for older adults with the support of Metro bond funds.

At any point this project could have unraveled, and we would have 54 fewer affordable housing units in Washington County. Seeing this project across the finish line taught me two me valuable lessons:

The first: the tenuous nature of affordable housing development and
The second: The massive demand for affordable older adult housing

We currently have enough people on the interest list to fill the building 3 times over. Let me say that again with 54 units we have over 170 people waiting for homes. Many of these people do not have years to wait. Most are the lowest income earners making between \$0-25,000 a year. Their options are increasingly limited, and many are forced into unsafe and unacceptable living conditions in the final years of their lives.

I implore you to act now to create more pathways to fund affordable housing for older adults and remove barriers to the creation of safe housing where our older adults can be celebrated and thrive.

Thank you for your time and consideration.