



HOUSING SENIORS | CREATING HOPE | PILOTING CHANGE

March 6, 2025

House Committee on Early Childhood and Human Services
Chair Annessa Hartman
Vice-Chair Hoa Nguyen
Vice-Chair Anna Scharf

Re: Support for House Bill 3497

Dear Chair Hartman, Vice-Chair Nguyen, Vice-Chair Scharf, and members of the House Committee on Early Childhood and Human Services:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of Senate Bill 3497, which establishes a long-term, multisector plan on aging and recommendations for becoming an age-friendly state.

Northwest Pilot Project (NWPP) is a social service agency with over five decades of experience in providing housing stabilization services to low and very low-income older adults, aged 55 and over, experiencing or at risk of homelessness in Multnomah County.

I am reaching out to you as a policy advocate for NWPP, and as a gerontologist who is uniquely qualified to comment on this bill. In addition to research and teaching related to environmental gerontology at Portland State University, I have approximately 18 years of experience working in the field of age-friendly communities, including international work and collaborating with communities in other states.

This past fall I presented a keynote address to the Oregon State University Gerontology Conference titled, “Are We Age-Friendly Yet? 17+ Years of Age-Friendly Research, Policy, and Practice in Oregon”. Spoiler alert, Oregon has not arrived at being an age-friendly state, but HB 3497 moves our state toward that goal.

I have experience “in the trenches” as I worked on Portland’s age-friendly program since its inception in 2006. One of the biggest hurdles that the effort experienced during my time coordinating Portland’s age-friendly program was the disjointed, siloed approach to the work. Even though our action plans touched on 10 domains – e.g. housing, transportation, civic participation, health care, community services and more – planning efforts largely fell to one unit (e.g., the City’s Bureau of Planning and Sustainability). As such, the operational approaches and leadership of an individual department or bureau are inherently focused on its internal policies and procedures and/or those siloed departments/bureaus lack the power



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to effectively bridge with other departments or units. HB 3497 attempts to see the big picture by assembling a task force with wide expertise and experience that can advance age friendliness in a holistic and collaborative manner.

I want to underscore that an aging Oregon is one of the biggest demographic challenges we face as a state. As NWPP experiences daily, older adults are struggling and the systemic issues that put pressure on them are difficult to address. Housing and health care are among the most pressing issues we see on a daily basis, but so are transportation, social isolation, and economic insecurity.

Please consider voting yes on HB 3497 so we can set in motion a multi-sector plan to address the challenges older Oregonians can and will face.

Sincerely,
Alan

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