

LU-24-027 IN-PERSON TESTIMONY SUBMITTAL COVER SHEET

Received From: Kirsten Starkey

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Email: Kirstenstarkey@gmail.com

Phone: 541-286-0935

Address: 825 SE goodnight Av.

City, State, Zip: Corvallis OR 97333

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IDENTIFIER:

Testimony of Kirsten Starkey

825 Goodnight Av

Corvallis OR 97333

Opposition Testimony - LU-24-027

My name is **Kirsten Starkey**, and I stand before you today as a representative of the **Board of Directors for Bit by Bit Adaptive and Therapy Riding**. I urge you—on behalf of our clients, volunteers, and the animals who make this program possible—to **reject LU-24-027**. I also hold a Masters in Business Administration, am a licensed real estate broker and own a local brokerage.

Bit by Bit is a small but powerful 501(c)(3) nonprofit that provides adaptive and therapeutic horseback riding for children and adults with a wide range of disabilities and life challenges. We are also contracted through **DHS Child Services** to support foster youth through equine-assisted programs. More recently, we have proudly expanded to include **equine-assisted physical therapy**, offering vital services that simply can't be replicated in a traditional clinical setting. For many of our riders, these sessions represent the first time they've experienced confidence, independence, and connection.

Our stable and property share two direct borders with Republic Services' forestland and sit among the **closest neighbors** to the proposed expansion site. Because of our location, the program has already been **deeply impacted** by existing Coffin Butte operations. The proposed expansion site will bring dump operations dramatically closer to our program site and will more seriously interfere with the use of our property in violation of BCC 53.215(1).

Trash has become a constant presence in the pastures and paddocks—the same spaces our therapy horses rely on. While volunteers work tirelessly to clean the property, airborne plastic and paper are regularly deposited on our land and bits of plastic remain embedded in the soil. These fragments threaten the health of our animals and contaminate the land and water we all depend on. Portions of our property are now **unsafe for horse turnout or exercise**, rendering key parts of the facility unusable.

The ongoing **blasting operations** pose another serious interference and danger. Horses are sensitive animals, and the sudden explosions terrify them and their riders. Imagine a child with special needs or a foster youth—already working to build trust and emotional regulation—suddenly atop a startled horse. Even one unexpected blast can undo weeks of therapeutic progress, and yet, we're often given little to no notice to prepare or reschedule. When we are actually notified of impending blasts, they are vague and cover unrealistically large blocks of time.

These safety and environmental issues are compounded by the **odor and air pollution** that regularly drift from the dump site. Clients and families have commented on the stench and noise, and some have questioned whether it's safe to continue their sessions. This not only threatens our ability to serve the community but jeopardizes the sustainability of the entire program and business operation.

If this expansion moves forward, and the dump operations move ever closer, the already thin buffer between our property and Coffin Butte will vanish. The risks—to our animals, clients, and staff—will increase dramatically. It is difficult to see how Bit by Bit could safely continue to operate under those conditions.

As a **Realtor®**, I can also attest that such an expansion would have a **negative effect on surrounding property values**. Due to the proximity to the dump, relocation would be financially impossible for Bit by Bit as there would be a stigma attached to the property. Specifically, the State of Oregon requires sellers to provide buyers a Property Disclosure Statement. Adjacent dumps cause a material defect or a potential hazard to the property, thus the seller must disclose it. Oregon law requires sellers to disclose any material defects that are not readily apparent and could affect the property's value or desirability. I respectfully ask each of you- what it would take for you to live adjacent to a major regional waste disposal site? How much would the seller have to reduce the price for you to take a gamble? This very question would be asked of any potential buyers of the Bit by Bit property. If we are being honest, it would require a substantial price reduction to make living there tenable. Being forced to accept a sizeable market value reduction simply to relocate to somewhere safe, would leave Bit by Bit without the resources to find a new home that could accommodate the horses. The closer the dump gets to the property, the more negatively the market value will be affected because potential buyers are being asked to accept the blasts, the odor and the airborne plastic and trash. This property's highest and best use has always been for **livestock and agriculture**—uses that would become untenable under the shadow of a landfill expansion.

Bit by Bit is more than a nonprofit—it is a **lifeline** for individuals who often feel unseen. To lose this space would be more than an inconvenience; it would be a **profound loss for our community**.

I respectfully ask this Commission to **protect this valuable community resource** by denying LU-24-027. The people and animals who rely on Bit by Bit deserve better than to be collateral damage in an expansion that serves no one at the local level.

Thank you for your time and for your compassion in considering what's truly at stake.

Kirsten Stanley