

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

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Date: 22, Oct 2025

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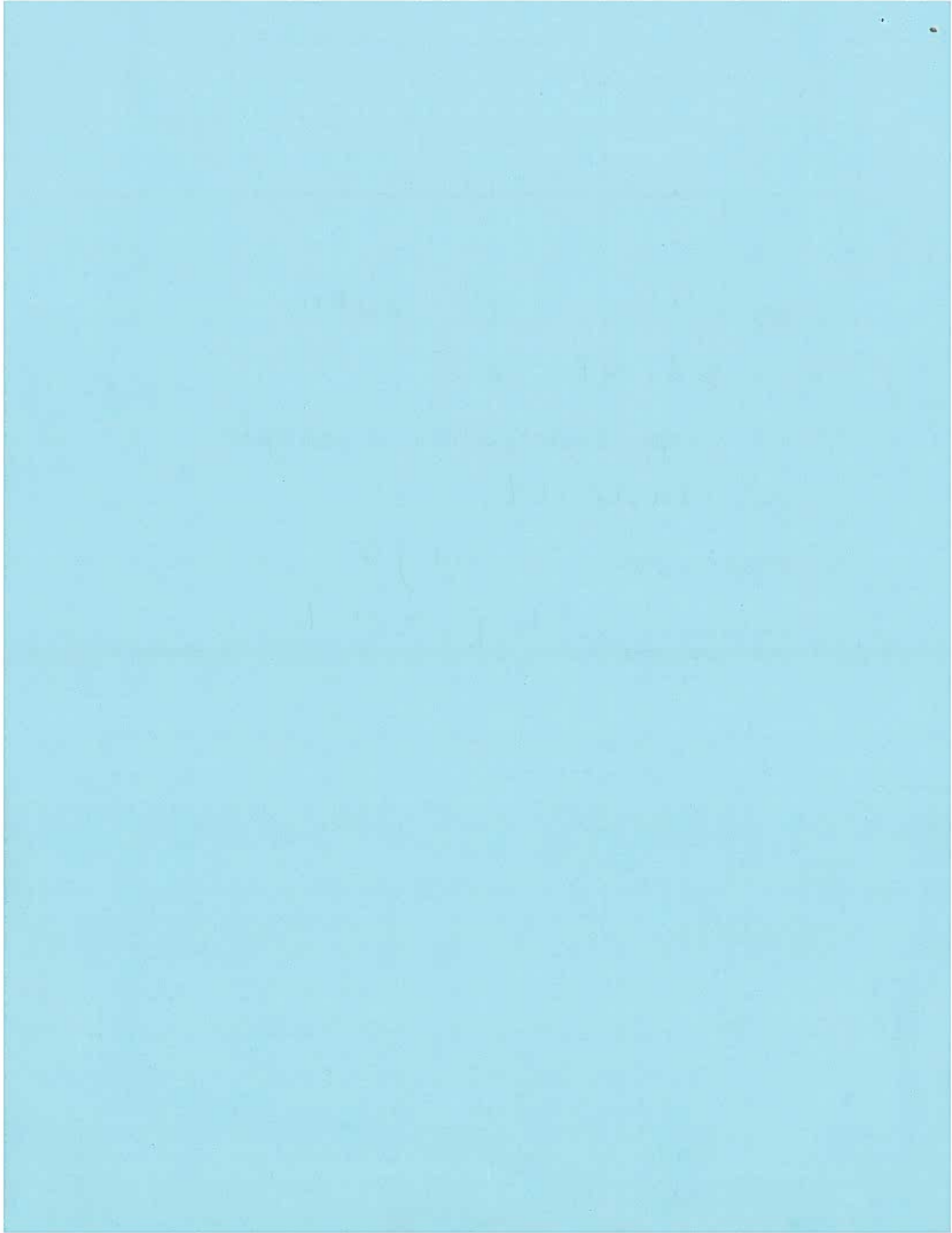
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Good evening, Commissioners.

My name is Steph Newton, and I serve as the City Council President in Albany, representing Ward 1, which includes North Albany — the second-largest city in Benton County. I've heard from many of my constituents about this issue, and that's why I'm here tonight — to share what I've learned after reviewing the reports and listening to the community. I want to be clear that I'm speaking solely as a resident and community member, not on behalf of the Albany City Council or any organization.

over 2x size
of Philadelphia,
I've heard from other elected
why I care,
this is
why.
Gabe
you know
how
much
North
Albany
residents
are

I've spent a lot of time reviewing both the Planning Commission's findings and the County staff report, as well as the thousands of pages of testimony submitted over the past year. I understand and respect the passion and the concerns that this topic has stirred in our community — and I've done my homework. After that research, I've come to agree with Benton County staff's recommendation that this expansion should move forward with the 34 conditions they've outlined to safeguard our environment and public health.

Now, I'll be honest — I'm the kind of person who tries very hard not to create waste. I compost. I recycle. I reuse jars and yogurt containers. I even have red wiggler worms happily working away in my garden doing their part to help me reduce waste — (and create some awesome compost for my garden).. And yet — even I still create trash. So does every household, every business, every city in Oregon. The question isn't whether we generate waste — it's how responsibly we handle it.

That's why I think this discussion has to be rooted in realism as well as responsibility. The Coffin Butte Landfill serves nearly a third of

the Mid-Willamette Valley's waste. If the expansion is denied, the waste doesn't vanish — it gets trucked hundreds of miles away to other landfills, often in communities with fewer resources to manage the impact. That means more diesel traffic on our highways, higher transportation costs, more wear and tear on the roads we just funded through Oregon's new \$4.3 billion transportation package, and increased greenhouse-gas emissions from long-haul transport.

Keeping disposal local is the more sustainable, fiscally responsible option. It keeps jobs here, keeps dollars circulating in our own communities, and allows Benton County to directly oversee environmental safeguards instead of relying on other jurisdictions with different priorities or weaker oversight.

Beyond odor → The County staff report makes clear that the proposed conditions address the major concerns raised — groundwater protection, odor and noise management, litter control, lighting limits, and wildlife protections, including for the great blue heron rookery nearby. These are not superficial fixes; they are enforceable, measurable, and based on technical evidence reviewed by experts.

And beyond environmental safeguards, the economic benefits are significant. The expansion would generate millions in discretionary revenue for Benton County every year — funds that can go directly toward roads, bridges, and environmental programs. At a time when taxpayers are already being asked to contribute more for infrastructure improvements, turning away a project that creates local revenue for those same goals seems short-sighted.

I know that trust in big companies — especially those in the waste industry — can be hard to come by. That's why strong, enforceable

conditions and ongoing public oversight are so important. But saying “no” to Coffin Butte doesn’t eliminate the need for waste management. It just sends our trash — and the related pollution — to someone else’s backyard. I’d rather see Benton County continue to lead with accountability, transparency, and science-based regulation than outsource the problem and pretend it’s solved.

This isn’t about politics or partisanship. It’s about fiscal responsibility, environmental stewardship, and long-term planning. The people who work at Coffin Butte are our neighbors. The trucks that haul waste drive on our roads. The revenue supports our shared services. And the decisions made here tonight will shape how our entire region manages growth and sustainability for decades to come.

I understand that reasonable people can disagree — and I genuinely appreciate the dedication of everyone who’s engaged in this process. But after reading the reports, reviewing the data, and weighing the environmental and economic impacts, I believe this expansion — under strict, enforceable conditions — is the responsible path forward for Benton County and the Mid-Willamette Valley.

Thank you for your time and for your careful consideration.

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➤ and on the topic of odor - I know that's one of the biggest concerns neighbors have raised. No one wants unpleasant smells around their home. But I think it's important that we're honest about where they're coming from. Much of what I think folks are attributing to refineries is actually from Aji - directly east of Adair Village and I know the city of Albany is working with Aji to mitigate those.