

Submitter: Andrew Epperson
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Housing and Development
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB1576
Chair Pham, Vice Chair Anderson, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Andrew Epperson, and I live in Portland, Oregon. I am writing to express my strong support for SB 1576, legislation that would expand the availability of accessible housing for Oregonians with disabilities and older adults.

Accessible housing is extremely difficult to find across our state. Many homes include steps at every entrance, narrow doorways, or bathrooms that cannot be used safely by people with mobility limitations. For individuals who have difficulty walking and for Oregon's growing population of older adults, these barriers can turn the search for housing into an overwhelming and often unsuccessful process.

This issue became very real for me when my mother was diagnosed with cancer. At the time, her prognosis was bleak, and there was genuine uncertainty about how our living situation would be affected. While I am grateful to say that she is doing much better now, the lack of accessible and appropriate housing options created the possibility that I could have been forced into a group home setting, not because it was the best choice for me, but because there were no viable alternatives available.

That outcome would not have reflected my needs, my goals, or my desire to live independently, and it runs counter to Oregon's Person-First service initiatives, which emphasize choice, autonomy, and community-based living. Housing scarcity should never be the factor that determines whether someone is institutionalized.

SB 1576 offers a practical and forward-looking solution by requiring that a greater share of new housing be built to recognized accessibility standards. Over time, this will increase the supply of homes that people with disabilities can actually use and help ensure Oregon's housing stock reflects the real needs of its residents.

Accessibility is about more than design. It is about dignity, independence, and the ability to remain part of one's community. SB 1576 addresses a fundamental problem in our housing system. There are simply far too few accessible homes available today.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge you to support and pass SB 1576. Thank you for your time, consideration, and continued commitment to addressing Oregon's housing challenges.

Sincerely,
Andrew Epperson