

Senate Committee on Housing and Development May 3, 2023

Esteemed Chair Jama, Vice Chair Anderson and members of the Senate Committee on Housing and Development

I coordinate a small program that certifies homes as accessible in Southern Oregon, called Lifelong Housing Certification, at Rogue Valley Council of Governments Senior and Disability Services. RVCOG SDS is an Area Agency on Aging.

I am writing ***in support of HB 3309***. The bill that begins to lay the groundwork for increasing number of housing units available in Oregon that meet accessibility needs of people with disabilities and those who wish to age in place. Demographics are shifting.

The first step is ***annual report*** of numbers of new accessible units that are funded through Oregon Housing and Community Services. I hope the survey will also identify the numbers of people who have accessible housing needs, but whose needs are not currentl being met. With the passage of HB3309, the voices of people with disabilities would finally be in the mix as decisions are made about how OHCS funds projects.

Human service providers like we can share stories of individuals; however, being able to put a numeric value on the shortage of accessible units will raise awareness of the impact on the whole community. ***There is a tangible increased dollar cost to the “system” (state budget) of people who must live in facilities or on the street because they have lost mobility and their homes have become unlivable for them.***

There is a myth abounding that to make a unit accessible is hugely expensive and will divert resources from the need to increase the number of affordable units. ***This is not true when a home is made accessible from the design stage.***

- A local builder in Southern Oregon, who has over 100 homes certified in our program says that the primary additional cost to a home is the special pan under a roll-in shower and special appliances—1-2% of total construction costs.
- The same is born out for apartments by our local Housing Authority of Jackson County. The average cost per unit to build is \$250,000 and the additional cost per fully-wheelchair-accessible unit is about \$10,000 (about 2.5%). All units are visitable.
- “Universally designed” units are more comfortable and safer for all dwellers, not just those with mobility disabilities.

The summary of HB3309-A seems to have lost the previous requisite that OHCS develop incentives for builders to create more than the minimum-required number of accessible units. That would have been a strong step forward. If it has been deleted, please consider putting that back into the bill. Regardless, I thank the committee for your consideration of this bill and for your dedication to community. Sincerely, Connie Saldana

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