



February 5, 2025

Matt Serres, Policy Director
Oregon Council on Developmental Disabilities
2475 SE Ladd Ave #231
Portland, OR 97214

RE: Testimony to Senate Committee on Housing & Development Senate Bill 444
(Neutral)

To Chair Pham, Vice-Chair Anderson, and Members of the Committee:

The Oregon Council on Developmental Disabilities (OCDD) works to create change so that people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) can live full lives as valued members of their communities. Accessible housing benefits all Oregonians. Families, older adults, and people with disabilities all need homes that fit specific disability-related needs. Unfortunately, Oregon state building code requirements for wheelchair accessible units have lagged behind demand for decades creating an accessibility crisis for many Oregonians.

The story of Kimber Lundy underscores the importance of SB 444. In her separate video testimony,¹ she describes the challenges she experienced in finding an accessible home. After being waitlisted for two years in her search for an affordable and accessible place to live, she finally had to settle for a “partially” accessible home. Initially, she could hardly enter her home because of an inaccessible entrance until friends donated to her a wheelchair ramp. Her bathroom door is too narrow for her wheelchair, so climbing into the shower every day poses a risk of injury. Her kitchen also is not built for wheelchairs putting her at risk of further injury and making it difficult to cook her meals.

¹ Kimber’s testimony is available through the Oregon Legislative Information System here:
<https://olis.oregonlegislature.gov/liz/2025R1/Downloads/PublicTestimonyDocument/122473>



She is not alone in facing those obstacles. As a disability advocate of ten years, I have worked with individuals rendered homeless by the lack of accessible housing. Clients I have represented have been forced to crawl up stairs due to broken elevators or missing ramps, or leave their wheelchairs behind in order to squeeze through narrow passageways in poorly constructed spaces in their own homes.

An inaccessible home is tantamount to no home at all.

The proposed legislation improves accessibility in three ways:

1. Increasing the stock of wheelchair accessible units (“Type A”) in large apartment complexes with 10 or more units.
2. Increasing the number of units that can be adapted (“Type B”) in the future for wheelchair users.²
3. Applying heightened accessibility guidelines found in the Uniform Federal Accessibility Standards to state-subsidized housing.

Hard numbers also tell the story of a population of Oregonians that cannot find a home due to the lack of accessible units. Under the *Oregon Structural Specialty Code* as it is currently written, dwelling units that are fully accessible to wheelchairs are “Type A” units. Those units are required in 2% of buildings that contain 20 or more units. Buildings of that size account for only 10% of Oregon’s housing stock.³ As a result, code requirements promise that merely 0.2% (or 2

² “Type B” units are currently required for first floor units in all middle and multi-unit housing with 4 or more units. For middle or multi-unit housing with an elevator, it is all of them that are required to be “Type B,” so long as the building has 4 or more units. The proposed bill SB 444 would apply this standard to buildings that have 3 or more units, which may gradually increase the percentage of “Type B” units from 4.7% of Oregon’s total housing stock to 5.6% over time.

³ The American Community Survey 1-year estimates for the types of housing structures in Oregon show that there are only 179,522 dwelling units in buildings with 20 or more units out of a total of 1,879,510 dwelling units throughout the state, which translates to approximately 10% of Oregon’s total housing stock. See American Community Survey, “2023: ACS 1-Year Estimated Detailed Tables,” Table B25024 (“Units by Structure”). Available here: https://data.census.gov/table/ACSDT1Y2023.B25024?q=B25024&g=040XX00US41_1400000US41051007600



out of every 1000 units) of Oregon's total housing stock will be wheelchair accessible.⁴ There are no accessibility requirements for single-family homes.

Those are only paper promises, and no guarantee in practice. Whether 0.2% of the units that are required to be "Type A" units are actually built to code is unknown due to poor enforcement. Moreover, not all of the units are rented to those with disabilities who would benefit from the accessibility features.

While the actual number of Oregon households who include someone who uses a wheelchair remains untracked, American Housing Survey data shows that 13% of households in the U.S. include someone who uses a mobility device, such as a cane, crutches, or a wheelchair.⁵ In the state of Oregon, 7.1% of Oregonians report having an ambulatory disability that causes serious difficulty walking or climbing stairs.⁶ When comparing those percentages to a state building code that for decades has promised only 0.2% of units must be wheelchair accessible, it is clear why there is an accessibility crisis. It will take decades of new construction to undo the damage already done and ensure Oregon's accessible housing stock has sufficient supply to meet demand.

SB 444 will increase the supply of wheelchair-accessible housing so Kimber and thousands of individuals like her can live with greater dignity, safety, and independence. It will have a positive impact for people with I/DD many of whom rely on wheelchairs and other mobility devices in their day-to-day lives. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on SB 444.

⁴ The proposed bill SB 444 would increase the percentage of "Type A" units from 2% to 10% of all units in buildings larger than 10 units—whereas the current 2% standard only applies to buildings with 20 or more units. Those improvements may gradually increase the percentage of "Type A" units from 0.2% of Oregon's total housing stock to 1.3% over time, which is more in alignment with the number of Oregonians who use wheelchairs. While 0.2% is what is currently required for wheelchair accessibility across Oregon's entire housing stock, it is possible that in practice some builders exceed those minimum standards but it is uncertain to what extent that actually occurs.

⁵ SP Group LLC submitted a report to the US Department of Housing and Urban Development, "Accessibility in Housing: Findings from the 2019 American Housing Survey," which states 13% of households indicated that "someone in the household used a mobility-assistive device, such as a cane, crutches, electric or manual wheelchair, or something else." See page 7. Available here:

<https://www.huduser.gov/portal/sites/default/files/pdf/Accessibility-in-Housing-Report.pdf>

⁶ Center for Research on Disability, "Annual Disability Statistics Compendium (2024)," Table 1.7, page 23. Available here: <https://www.researchondisability.org/sites/default/files/media/2024-07/2024-compendium-final.pdf>