

Senate Committee on Housing and Development
Regarding SB1576

Esteemed Chair Senator Pham, Vice Chair Senator Anderson and Committee Members:

I have worked with adults with disabilities and older adults for over 30 years at an Area Agency on Aging and Disability in Southern Oregon. From the daily experiences of the people I have served, I have been continually made aware of the acute shortage of housing that is accessible for individuals who have mobility impairments, as well as for people who are older—and not-so-older—who want to “age in place.” Not only is an accessible home safer from falls, and more livable for all residents, but for families and caregivers, as well.

If a builder of subsidized housing starts from the plan stage, an accessible unit costs a relatively small amount more “per door,” than a regular unit. My local Housing Authority estimates the increased cost for additional square footage, a roll-in shower, and specialized appliances to be about 4% more than a non-accessible apartment. Since this extra cost currently pertains to only 5% of the units in a large development, when the cost is spread over the whole development, the extra cost of those units is extremely small proportionally*

Since, by definition, residents of subsidized housing have low incomes, increasing the number of accessible units of subsidized housing would save taxpayers multiple times the amount of the increased construction costs over the years--just due to falls prevention alone--in Medicaid long term care and Medicare acute care dollars.

SB1576 would increase the number of fully accessible units in larger complexes from the federal minimum of 5% to 10%, and from 2% to 4% of accessible units for people with sensory disabilities.

It should be pointed out that this increased formula is already in effect in Oregon Housing and Community Services’ Qualified Allocation Plan for projects seeking Low Income Housing Tax Credit incentives. Those provisions can be found in “Appendix A: Enhanced Accessibility Standards” of the Plan.

I thank you sincerely for your attention,
Connie Saldana

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- Assume \$150,000 per door for 100-unit apartment=\$15,000,000 total cost of the development. 1 accessible unit = $4\% \times \$150,000 = \6000 x 5 units= \$30,000 additional cost. 10 units=\$60,000. If 10% units are accessible, that would be an additional cost to the development of 0.4%