



Esteemed Chair Marsh, Vice Chairs Breese-Iverson and Gamba, and Members of the Committee on Housing and Homelessness,

I am writing in support of HB3589. Senior & Disability Services of Rogue Valley Council of Governments is a department of the Area Agency on Aging that serves older adults and adults with disabilities in Jackson and Josephine Counties. The availability of accessible affordable housing is critical to our clients and Disability Services Advisory Council members. Our response was to create our Lifelong Housing Certification Program* a few years ago. The program assesses and certifies homes as visitable, fully accessible, or custom accessible. Our certification program has also been put into action by LiveAble Homes & Design, a Portland Metro and Salem area B Corporation.

In addition, we operated a HUD-funded program to provide permanent supportive housing to homeless people with disabilities for 20 years. In that time, I saw firsthand how difficult it is for a person experiencing homelessness who uses a wheelchair or scooter to find a home they can first enter, then reside in safely and comfortably. Not only are accessible units extremely rare, but once a person finds one, the low over-all vacancy rate (1% in Southern Oregon) means a landlord could easily receive 40 applications. Time and again--even though I could guarantee to pay a person's rent and utilities and provide case management to ensure they would be a good tenant--landlords simply chose not to rent to them. At one point, I had two separate mobility-challenged women over 65 years old on my caseload for 8 months, unable to find willing landlords of accessible units. One woman was eventually able to get into an 8' by 8' tiny home in a village, the other was forced to continue living in a shelter dormitory.

HB3589 would create the Senior Housing Development Initiative to increase the number of accessible affordable rental homes through new development, redevelopment, or preservation. I hope that by linking this bill to the **OHA's Healthy Homes Initiative** (in Section 2.(1)(b)), this bill would also fund programs that make financing available to landlords who wish to upgrade their units' level of accessibility. New affordable accessible units are the gold standard; but modifications to rental homes that are currently on the market are a quicker step to make more accessible units available to people who are desperately searching for appropriate homes.

Thank you very much for your work on this. I encourage the passage of HB3589.

* www.lifelonghousing.org

Sincerely,
Connie Saldaña, Program Coordinator

Lifelong Housing Certification Program
Senior & Disability Services of Rogue Valley Council of Governments
lifelonghousing@rvcog.org

155 North 1st Street • P.O. Box 3275 • Central Point, OR 97502

Designated Area Agency on Aging for Jackson and Josephine Counties Providing Services to Seniors and Adults with Disabilities

541-423-1383