



TO: Senate Committee on Housing and Development
FROM: Disability Rights Oregon
DATE: February 14, 2024
RE: **SB 444 -- Support**

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

I am speaking on behalf of Disability Rights Oregon (DRO) and am pleased to offer testimony in strong support of SB 444. We also want to thank Senator Patterson for working diligently with us to bring this bill forward.

DRO is proud to be one of the main authors of SB 444. The need for accessible housing far exceeds the available supply. Many people with disabilities struggle to find housing that meets both their accessibility and affordability needs. As a result, they are often forced to live in settings that isolate them from their support networks and essential services or in more restrictive environments such as adult foster homes or residential treatment facilities.

With access to appropriate housing, people with disabilities can live independently, improving their quality of life while also reducing costs to the state. SB 444 is a critical step toward ensuring that accessible, affordable housing is available to all who need it. SB 444 seeks to address the severe unmet need for accessible housing in three key ways:

1. **Increasing the number of accessible units:** The bill requires that projects with 10 or more units built with state funds, including those using Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC), designate at least 10% of units as accessible according to the Uniform Federal Accessibility Standards (UFAS). Currently, only 5% of units in federally funded projects must meet these standards.
2. **Expanding Type A accessibility requirements:** The bill mandates that 10% of units in projects with 10 or more units meet the Type A accessibility standard. Presently, Oregon's structural specialty code only requires accessibility features in 2% of units, and only in buildings with 20 or more units.
3. **Expanding Fair Housing Act protections:** The bill extends the Fair Housing Act's design and construction requirements to include triplexes. Currently, these requirements apply only to projects with four or more units.

This bill is just the beginning. We are proud of our efforts to engage with developers, housing providers, and community members to make meaningful progress toward housing accessibility. Passing SB 444 will be a critical step forward in creating a solution that works for all parties and, most importantly, ensures that people with disabilities have access to safe, accessible, and affordable housing.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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Disability Rights Oregon is the Protection and Advocacy System for Oregon

About Disability Rights Oregon

Since 1977 Disability Rights Oregon has been the State's Protection and Advocacy System.¹ We are authorized by Congress to protect, advocate, and enforce the rights of people with disabilities under the U.S. Constitution and Federal and State laws, investigate abuse and neglect of people with disabilities, and "pursue administrative, legal, and other appropriate remedies".² We are also mandated to "educate policymakers" on matters related to people with disabilities.³

If you have any questions regarding DRO's position on this legislation, please call Ben Gurewitz at 971-806-7908 or email him at bgureiwtz@droregon.org.

¹ See ORS 192.517.

² See 42 U.S.C. § 15041 et seq; 42 U.S.C. § 10801 et seq.

³ See 42 U.S. Code § 15043(a)(2)(L).