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May 3, 2023

To: Sen. Kayse Jama, Chair Senate Committee on Housing and Development
From: Jennifer Knapp, Community Vision
RE: Support for HB 3309

Chair Jama and Members of the Committee:

My name is Jennifer Knapp, and I am the Executive Director of Community Vision, a support organization in the Portland Metro area serving people with disabilities. Since our founding in 1989, expanding affordable housing options for people with disabilities has been a core tenet of our organization. Today, that commitment remains as strong as ever.

I am here today to urge you to support HB 3309. It is an important step towards determining the unmet housing needs of people with disabilities.

In our years of experience working with people with disabilities to find housing, one of the key limiting factors is a lack of accessible units. Some people have waited years to get into an apartment that accommodates their needs. Others have faced costly renovations and landlords forcing them to remove accessibility features when they move out. Still others are only able to access a small portion of their living space because the rest is inaccessible.

The challenges are real, but the truth is as a society we do not know much about this need.

As our state grapples with the myriad of equity issues, the needs of people with disabilities are often overlooked. But here is the reality: people with disabilities are more likely to be homeless than non-disabled people. They are also more likely to be living in poverty, experiencing domestic violence, and experiencing housing discrimination.

We want to start reversing these trends today.

It is time to give people with disabilities the attention they deserve, and HB 3309 is a great step in that direction. This bill directs OHCS to report on the number of funded accessible units and incorporate incentives to increase the quality and quantity of accessible units across the state.

Please support HB 3309 and take this step towards the inclusion of people with disabilities in our communities.

Jennifer Knapp, Executive Director, Community Vision