

Submitter: Cassie Wilson

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Housing and Development

Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB444

Dear Chair Pham and members of the committee,

I'm a disabled renter and Oregonian, and I urge you to support SB 444 to increase the number of accessible housing units in the state.

I'm 26 years old and many of my peers struggle to find affordable housing that meets their needs, and while the same experience is true for me, it's even harder for me to find housing because so much of our existing housing stock is inaccessible. I grew up in Clackamas County and despite wanting to stay in the area I ended up moving to the Central Eastside neighborhood of Portland because it was the only option that was accessible and affordable to me. I also have friends who want me to be able to visit but hesitate to rent ground floor apartments because they fear taking them from someone else because they are so limited.

I'm really excited about the state's efforts to spur more development and meet housing production targets, but if that housing does not meet the diverse needs of Oregonians, then we will have failed to adequately address the housing crisis. That's what makes this bill so necessary.

And honestly, in my eyes, this bill is the bare minimum. My landlord said my apartment is considered an accessible unit, but you'd never know it by looking at it. My unit is nearly identical to all of my neighbors', but with more accessibility features in the shower/tub. There are no grab bars by the toilet; my laundry machines are stacked so I can't reach the dryer; I can't reach my freezer; the knobs for my stove aren't at the front, so I have to use my cane to turn the stove on; my counters are standard height; the microwave is above the stove; and my building doesn't have accessible power doors anywhere. If you're wondering how this is possible, it's because the Fair Housing Act standards allow it.

This bill would simply mean that more units being built are designed in a way that disabled people can enter and navigate them safely with no stairs, wider doorways, and room to navigate tight spaces such as the bathroom.

I see SB 444 as just the beginning of the significant work that needs to be done to ensure that we provide truly accessible housing to people with disabilities and older adults.

Thank you for your consideration.

DISCLAIMER: I'm a registered lobbyist with 1000 Friends of Oregon, and while I do strongly support the testimony being submitted by the organization, the thoughts expressed in this submission are solely my own.