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TO: Senate Housing and Development Committee
FROM: Jennifer Knapp, Community Vision
RE: Support for Senate Bill 444

Chair Pham, Vice Chair Anderson and members of the Senate Committee on Housing and Development:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of SB 444. As my colleagues have shown, the need for accessible housing in Oregon far outweighs its supply. I have worked for people with disabilities my entire career, and have countless examples of people having to navigate a world that was not built for them. As a state, we have the opportunity to change that story with this bill.

I want to use my time to address the main concern that has been shared with us – the fear of increased costs. The good news is there are examples across our state where developers are voluntarily implementing this standard and have been able to do so within the same funding parameters of other affordable housing projects. Some developers have chosen to make 100% of their units accessible, and others have committed to the 10% standard requested in this bill. I'd like to highlight the experience of one development in Portland.

The project is Legin Commons, developed by Our Just Future and designed by Bora Architects. It is located in SE Portland and is currently under construction. The team was aware of the need for greater accessibility, so chose to design the project with 11% Type A, or fully accessible, units.

The team shared that there were little to no added costs when greater accessibility is included in the project from the beginning. In fact, including more Type A accessible units actually led to construction efficiencies, as they were able to reduce the number of unit types and stack the same unit types on top of each other. Stacking benefits multiple trades and building systems such as structural design, plumbing lines, and HVAC shafts. Finally, there were cost efficiencies related to accessible appliances, showers/tubs, etc. Generally, accessible versions do not cost more than non-accessible versions. But, volume does matter. Being able to buy the same item for more units decreased the per unit cost.

The Legin Commons experience, and many other examples of voluntary accessibility, helps to debunk the fear that increasing accessibility will increase costs. What is required is thinking differently when it comes to design, and creative thinking is what we need to get everyone's needs met.

I think it is safe to say that all of us in this room want to ensure we create more affordable housing in the state of Oregon. This bill helps ensure that all of our community can live in the housing we build.

Jennifer Knapp, Executive Director, Community Vision