

Submitter: Daisy Quinonez

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Housing and Homelessness

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3589

Dear Chair Marsh, Vice Chairs Breese-Iverson and Gamba, and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in strong support of Senate Bill 444. As a lifelong Oregonian and a housing policy analyst working in the public sector, I have dedicated my career to advancing policies that create stable, affordable housing. Prior to my current role, I worked directly with tenants facing precarious housing situations as a tenant education coordinator for Oregon's statewide renters' rights union. Through these experiences, I have seen firsthand the urgent need for more accessible housing across our state, particularly for older adults and people with disabilities.

Oregon is aging, and our housing supply has not kept pace with the needs of our communities. Research from Portland State University's Population Research Center confirms that Oregon's population will continue to age and experience higher rates of disability. However, far too many older adults and people with disabilities struggle to find housing that accommodates their mobility and accessibility needs. Without intentional policy action, this gap will only widen, leading to increased housing insecurity and homelessness among some of our most vulnerable residents.

The housing crisis among older adults is already here. Older adults are the fastest-growing segment of Oregon's homeless population, with many relying on fixed incomes such as Social Security benefits that fall short of rising rents. A study on older adults experiencing homelessness found that nearly one-third could not find housing that met their accessibility needs, citing barriers like stairs, narrow doorways, and bathrooms without handrails. This reality is unacceptable in a state committed to equity and inclusion.

SB 444 is a necessary step toward addressing this crisis. By expanding the production of accessible housing, this bill aligns with Oregon's broader goals of ensuring fair and equitable housing opportunities for all. Moreover, accessible housing is a racial equity issue—Black, Indigenous, and mixed-race Oregonians experience the highest rates of disability at every age cohort, making this policy an essential tool in addressing long-standing disparities.

In addition to increasing the supply of accessible housing, we must also improve data collection on the existing stock of accessible units. The lack of comprehensive data hampers our ability to plan effectively, but it should not be an excuse for inaction.

Proactively ensuring that our housing stock meets the needs of an aging and diversifying population is both a moral and economic imperative.

I urge you to support SB 444 to ensure that Oregon remains a state where all residents—regardless of age or ability—can access safe, stable, and dignified housing. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,  
Daisy Quiñonez