

3 March 2025

To: House Committee on Housing and Homelessness
From: Michael Szporluk, Principal, MAS Consulting, LLC

Re: HB 3589,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of House Bill 3589, which requires Oregon's Housing and Community Services Department (OHCS) to develop and implement a senior housing development initiative.

As a preface I note that inaccessible housing, for persons with disabilities and their families, is inherently unstable and poses a health and safety risk. We need to proactively promote inclusive design and development. Otherwise, persons with disabilities and their families will be denied, de facto, the right to choose where and with whom they live. And this leads to a few key points:

First, I note that the Senate is considering Senate Bill 444 that would require an increase in the production of accessible units. Even if we assume that bill passes there will still be a lack of accessible housing stock given that currently only 1-2 percent of apartments are fully physical accessible.

Second, it is important to note that accessibility features are not just for persons with disabilities and older individuals. Many non-disabled people prefer accessibility features, such as zero-step entrances and more spacious garages.


Third, we know, given the correlations between aging and disability, and race and disability, that both in terms of raw numbers as well as a percent of the whole population, Oregon will experience a significant increase in the number and percent of persons with disabilities over the next twenty years. In fact, the demographic of older persons will experience more growth than any other demographic, and we know that older persons disproportionately are persons with disabilities. Thus, the demand for accessible housing will increase significantly and that increase will outpace the supply of accessible housing.

It will be important, therefore, to have a state agency responsible for proactively incentivizing the production of accessible housing, and providing funding for reasonable modifications and adaptations. It would be important for that agency to prioritize adherence to accessibility standards that are more stringent than merely "visitability." Incentives should be provided in alignment with the standards outlined in SB 444.

Fourth, it would be important for the state agency to not only support modifications to existing housing stock, but also to review and recommend changes to make accessible design the default standard going forward. We know that when housing is designed with accessibility in mind, it does not need to be more expensive than inaccessible housing. The Kelsey, [<https://thekelsey.org/>], a national non-profit that supports the development of accessible

housing in various markets, has shown that it can be cost-effective. Their inclusive design standards guide the entirety of their developments. They recently completed fully inclusive developments in San Jose and San Francisco at costs that were between 2- 14 % lower than those cities' averages for inaccessible construction.

I urge the adoption of HB 3589 and urge the House Committee to broaden how you think of the right to housing, as that broader lens will better prepare the state to meet Governor Kotek's goals as established in Executive Order 23-04, namely to ensure that we are able to maintain housing stability for all of our current and future residents.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Michael Szporluk", is displayed within a light blue rectangular box.

Michael Szporluk

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MAS Consulting is a sole proprietor LLC that conducts research, advocacy and evaluation to support the realization of the rights of persons with disabilities. MAS Consulting has consulted with clients, including with Oregon's Department of Land Conservation and Development (DLCD), over the past twelve years, working in roughly twenty countries across the globe on issues as diverse as housing, employment, health and nutrition, procurement, and policy development. In 2015 I wrote a book for UN-Habitat on the right to housing for persons with disabilities. Available at:

<https://unhabitat.org/the-right-to-adequate-housing-for-persons-with-disabilities-living-in-cities>