

Together, we can create a more inclusive and equitable society where everyone has access to safe, comfortable, and accessible housing.

**Thank You,**

***Tina Guenette***

**RAMP real access motivates Progress**

**President / CEO / Founder**

*2023 Community Choice RI person of the year,*

*United States Access Board- Public Member*

*Governor's Commission on Disability*

*Governors commission on Aging*

*Governors workforce board Adult pathways commission*

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**"Don't just SIT there.... make a DIFFERENCE"**

**"If you can't stand up....Stand out"**

## Dawn Huntley

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**From:** Tina Guenette <ramptina@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, April 9, 2025 9:37 PM  
**To:** House Municipal Government and Housing Committee  
**Subject:** Support house Bill H5374

To House Committee on Municipal Government & Housing committee & Dawn Huntley,

I'm writing to share my personal experience and emphasize the crucial need for physically accessible housing. As someone who uses a mobility aid, I've encountered numerous barriers in my own home and community.

The importance of accessible housing cannot be overstated. It's not just a matter of convenience; it's a fundamental human right. Everyone deserves to live in a safe, comfortable, and inclusive environment.

From personal experience, I can attest that inaccessible housing can significantly impact one's quality of life. Simple tasks become daunting challenges, and independence is severely limited. I've had to rely on others for assistance, which can be frustrating and demoralizing.

To make my own home accessible, I've had to invest significant time and resources. However, I was fortunate enough to have the opportunity to build my house in 2020 with Habitat For Humanity as one of the first fully accessible houses intentionally built in the state of Rhode Island. This experience has shown me that accessible housing is not only possible but also essential.

The need for accessible housing is pressing, especially in Rhode Island. A staggering 55% of Rhode Islanders use a mobility aid, such as a walker, wheelchair, or cane. Our baby boomers, aged 60 and older, are particularly affected. Accessible housing is a crucial part of ensuring that our seniors and individuals with disabilities can live independently and with dignity.

The sad reality is that inaccessible housing can lead to devastating consequences. Many individuals with disabilities are forced to live in institutions, separated from their families and communities. Even more heartbreaking is the reality that some are left with no choice but to face homelessness, only to find that shelters and supportive housing programs are often inaccessible.

In our current situation, the waitlist for accessible housing is unacceptable. Someone using a mobility aid could wait 9 1/2 to 11 years for housing, and even then, the options are often limited to high-rise buildings or institutional settings. This is not a viable solution, especially for younger generations who are increasingly using mobility aids.

We need a range of housing options, including individual homes, duplexes, and community-based settings, that are affordable and accessible. This is not only a matter of providing basic human rights but also of supporting families and communities.

For parents who have children with disabilities or parents who use wheelchairs themselves, accessible housing is essential for maintaining family unity and promoting independence. Children should be able to grow up in their own communities, surrounded by their families and friends, without being forced into institutional settings.

In conclusion, I urge policymakers, developers, and community leaders to prioritize physically accessible housing. This includes incorporating universal design principles, providing funding for accessibility modifications, and promoting inclusive zoning policies.