

House Committee on Municipal Government and Housing  
April 10th, 2025

Dear House Committee on Municipal Government and Housing,

My name is Lana Bargnesi and I am here before you today to voice my support of House Bill 5268.

Currently, I am the Advocacy Intern at the Community Provider Network of Rhode Island, as well as a student at the University of Rhode Island living off campus in Narragansett. I have been disabled since I was 14 due to a cancer diagnosis that left me permanently using a prosthetic leg. This bill would be monumental for individuals like me looking to live a life of autonomy and dignity.

I am grateful to be in a position where I can navigate barriers moderately easily but I often think “what about the people who can’t?” I look in my home and I see state of the art appliances, expensive granite countertops, grand arch door frames... but where is the railing on the stairs leading into the home? Where is the grab bar in the shower? How could a wheelchair fit through these narrow door frames? A home may look beautiful for some but presents a mobility nightmare for others.

The biggest challenge I face is using my shower bath combination in my home. It can be daunting to have to stand in a shower with no grab bar for support as well as enter and exit over the tub. Falling and getting injured would be catastrophic for my well being and would further hinder me from participating in my everyday life. To avoid this I have resorted to sitting on the shower floor instead of standing in the shower. This alone leaves me feeling dehumanized and defeated by my own home.

When building a unit with multiple units imagine the importance of representing the needs of those with disabilities as a representation of the broader community. For those looking for housing it can be hard just to find a unit available but to find one that is accessible to them is an entirely new challenge. It's fundamental for a person's quality of life to be able to have autonomy in their home and to use the home to its fullest potential.

A unit that is accessible to all can be used by all. The features of Type A standards can improve the lives of more than just people with disabilities. According to Skills For RI's Future: “Approximately 25 percent of the population in Rhode Island identifies as having an intellectual/developmental, mental health or physical disability.” This number only rises as our population ages. Accessible units help address the needs of Rhode Island's aging populations and those with disabilities making their purpose of the utmost importance.

With this being said, the features of Type A standards are simple modifications that can make a big difference. Wider door ways, accessible showers, and lever door handles may seem insignificant to some but they would make a world of a difference for someone with a disability.

I urge you to remember that most of us are only temporarily abled, by investing in our future we promote a more inclusive and sustainable Rhode Island for all. This is why I am asking you today to pass House bill 5268.

I thank you for your time and for giving me the opportunity to speak in favor of HB 5268. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

Lana Bargnesi

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