

Chair Stephen M. Casey
House Municipal Government &
Housing Committee
Rhode Island State House

March 17, 2026



RE: Testimony in support of H7564—Home-Fit Dwelling Units

Dear Chair Casey and Members of the Committee:

We respectfully submit this testimony in opposition to House Bill 7564, due to its potential unintended consequences on the development and availability of affordable housing in Rhode Island—particularly for vulnerable populations, including survivors of domestic violence.

While we strongly support the goal of increasing accessibility in housing and ensuring that residents of all ages and abilities can live safely and comfortably, we are concerned that the requirements proposed in this legislation may make it more difficult to build the very housing our state urgently needs.

Affordable housing development already operates within extremely tight financial constraints. Projects often rely on layered financing, including tax credits, grants, and loans, all of which are highly competitive and limited in supply. Even modest increases in construction costs can cause projects to become financially infeasible or significantly delay their development. House Bill 7564 would require a substantial percentage of units in new developments to meet Type A (fully accessible) and Type B (adaptable) standards. While these are important features, applying these requirements broadly could increase per-unit construction costs and reduce the total number of units that can be built.

These impacts are especially concerning for survivors of domestic violence, who often rely on the availability of affordable housing to safely exit abusive situations and rebuild their lives.^{i,ii,iii} Delays in housing production, reduced unit counts, or increased costs can directly limit the availability of safe, stable housing options for these individuals and families. In many cases, a lack of available housing is one of the primary barriers preventing survivors from leaving dangerous environments.

It is important to note that affordable housing developers already comply with existing accessibility requirements under federal and state law. Expanding these requirements without corresponding increases in funding or flexibility risks duplicating existing standards while undermining production. At a time when Rhode Island faces a severe housing shortage, policies that increase development costs or complexity should be carefully calibrated to avoid reducing overall housing supply especially for those in urgent need of safe housing, including survivors of domestic violence.^{iv}

We respectfully urge the Committee to consider amendments that would target accessibility requirements to developments where sufficient funding is available and ensure that efforts to improve accessibility do not inadvertently reduce access to housing for vulnerable populations. Getting the input from all housing developers but those especially in the space that will be disproportionately affected as a result of this bill is essential to consider going forward.

Thank you for your consideration of these concerns and for your continued efforts to address Rhode Island's housing challenges.

ⁱ National Low Income Housing Coalition (2020, June 10). Domestic violence. <https://nlihc.org/resource/domestic-violence>

ⁱⁱ Pavao, J., Alvarez, J., Baumrind, N., Induni, M., & Kimerling, R. (2007). Intimate partner violence and housing instability. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 32(2), 143-146. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.amepre.2006.10.008>

ⁱⁱⁱ Zapata, A. Wood, L. G., Galvin, A. M., Chan, W., Thomas, T. A., Tsai, J., Way, H. K., Mueller, E. J., & Hernandez, D. C. (2025). Domains of housing instability and intimate partner violence risk among U.S. tenants. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 22, 1212. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph22081212>

^{iv} National Low-Income Housing Association (NLHI) (n.d.). The gap: A shortage of affordable homes. <https://nlihc.org/gap>