

Testimony in Support of Rhode Island Accessible Housing Bill H 7564  
Submitted by Oakley Home Access

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of Oakley Home Access, I am writing to express our strong support for H 7564, the Accessible Housing Bill introduced by the Community Provider Network of Rhode Island (CPNRI).

Oakley Home Access is a Rhode Island based company specializing in home accessibility and mobility solutions. Our work focuses on helping individuals safely navigate their homes through the installation of accessibility equipment and modifications such as ramps, grab bars, stairlifts, railings, bathroom safety equipment, barrier-free showers, and other mobility solutions.

Every day we see firsthand the impact that inaccessible housing has on Rhode Islanders of all ages, particularly older adults and individuals living with disabilities.

For many residents, their homes were simply not designed with accessibility in mind. Narrow doorways, inaccessible bathrooms, multi-level entryways, and a lack of structural reinforcement for safety equipment create barriers that make everyday living difficult and, in many cases, dangerous. These design limitations often lead to preventable falls, loss of independence, and the need for costly retrofits later in life.

H 7564 takes an important and practical step toward addressing this issue by ensuring that new publicly funded housing developments with four or more units include a meaningful portion of accessible and adaptable units. Requiring 10% of units to meet Type A accessibility standards and an additional 25% to meet Type B standards ensures that more housing is built with accessibility and adaptability in mind from the start.

From our experience in the field, building accessibility into housing during initial construction is significantly more efficient and cost-effective than retrofitting homes years later, and keeps residents in their homes for much longer. Features such as wider doorways, appropriate clearances, reinforced bathroom walls for future grab bar installation, and adaptable bathroom layouts can make a profound difference in a resident's ability to age safely in place or remain independent following an illness or injury.

Rhode Island's population is aging rapidly, and the demand for accessible housing will continue to grow in the coming decades. By adopting these standards for new publicly supported housing developments, the state is planning responsibly for the future while promoting safety, dignity, and independence for its residents.

Beyond benefiting individuals with disabilities and older adults, accessible and adaptable housing benefits families, caregivers, and the broader healthcare system by helping prevent injuries and reducing the need for premature institutional care.

At Oakley Home Access, we see the real-world consequences when homes are not designed to accommodate changing mobility needs. We also see how small accessibility features can dramatically improve quality of life. H 7564 represents a thoughtful, balanced approach that will help ensure Rhode Island's housing stock better reflects the needs of its residents.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge the committee to support and pass H 7564.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

*Justin Oakley*  
*Oakley Home Access*

Oakley Home Access