



March 17, 2026

Chairman Casey, Vice Chair, and Members of the House Municipal Government & Housing Committee:

On behalf of **United Way of Rhode Island**, I respectfully submit testimony **in support of H7564/LC004676 – The Home-Fit Dwelling Units Act**.

United Way of Rhode Island works every day with families across the state who are striving to achieve stability but are one unexpected expense away from financial crisis. Through our **211/ADRC service, housing stability programs, and ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) research**, we see firsthand the challenges faced by families when housing does not meet the needs of residents with disabilities, mobility limitations, or aging family members.

Today, **nearly four in ten Rhode Island households fall within the ALICE population**—working families who earn above the federal poverty level but still struggle to afford basic necessities such as housing, childcare, food, and healthcare. For these households, the cost of modifying a home after a disability, injury, or aging-related mobility challenge can be financially devastating. Retrofitting a home for accessibility can cost thousands or even tens of thousands of dollars—expenses that many families simply cannot afford.

The **Home-Fit Dwelling Units Act** addresses this challenge by ensuring that a reasonable portion of new housing developed with public assistance incorporates accessibility design from the start. By requiring that **10 percent of units meet Type A accessibility standards and an additional 25 percent meet Type B adaptable standards**, this legislation helps ensure that housing is designed to serve residents of all ages and abilities.

From United Way’s perspective, this policy advances several important goals:

**First, it supports family stability.**

Accessible homes allow Rhode Islanders to remain safely in their communities as they age or as family needs change. Multigenerational households are increasingly common, and accessible housing makes it possible for families to care for aging parents, children with disabilities, or relatives recovering from illness or injury.

**Second, it supports the long-term sustainability of Rhode Island’s housing system.**

Incorporating accessibility during construction is significantly more cost-effective than retrofitting homes later. Designing housing that can adapt to residents’ needs over time reduces displacement and helps residents remain in their homes longer.

[Uniting our community and resources to build racial equity and opportunities for all Rhode Islanders](#)



**Third, it strengthens community inclusion.**

Accessible housing expands opportunities for people with disabilities to live independently, participate in the workforce, and remain connected to their communities.

United Way also appreciates several thoughtful elements included in the bill, including:

- Limiting applicability to developments receiving **state financial assistance or developed on public land**, ensuring that accessibility is incorporated into projects benefiting from public investment;
- Providing a **waiver process for true technical infeasibility**, while ensuring that cost alone is not used as a reason to avoid accessibility standards; and
- Requiring **data reporting**, which will help policymakers evaluate how accessible housing supply is evolving across Rhode Island.

As Rhode Island continues to address its housing shortage, it is important that we not only build more housing, but that we build housing designed to serve residents throughout the full course of their lives. Policies such as the Home-Fit Dwelling Units Act help ensure that public investments in housing produce communities that are **inclusive, resilient, and accessible for all Rhode Islanders**.

For these reasons, **United Way of Rhode Island respectfully urges the Committee to support this legislation.**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony and for your continued leadership in addressing Rhode Island's housing challenges.

Sincerely,

**Kyle Bennett**

Chief Policy and Impact Officer  
United Way of Rhode Island