



Testimony of Matt Netto, AARP Rhode Island  
**In Support of House Bill 7564**  
House Municipal Government & Housing Committee  
March 17, 2026

Chairman Casey and Members of the House Municipal Government and Housing Committee:

AARP is a nonpartisan, social mission organization with 38 million members nationwide and 125,000 members here in Rhode Island. We advocate on behalf of issues that impact older adults, and we appreciate the opportunity to support House Bill 7564 sponsored by Representative Spears.

Accessible housing that accommodates people of all ages and ability levels is crucial to the majority of Rhode Islanders; according to AARP's **2023 RI Vital Voices Survey** – 85% of Rhode Islanders 45+ think that it's extremely or very important for them to be able to stay in their own home as they get older. Most existing housing stock and new construction are multi-level with stairs, which poses a challenge for those who develop problems with mobility. House Bill 7564 would create the Home-Fit Dwelling Units Act, to apply to all new construction of covered dwelling units, to incorporate design features that provide safe and convenient use to the greatest extent feasible, regardless of age or physical ability.

House Bill 7564 would apply to all new housing developments permitted on or after July 1, 2027 with four (4) or more dwelling units that: receive any state financial assistance including, but not limited to, grants, loans, tax credits, bond proceeds, or below-market financing; or is developed on land owned by or conveyed from the state or a quasi-state entity. This act would require these developments to include at least ten percent (10%) Type A standards and an additional twenty-five percent (25%) following Type B standards.

The Type A unit was created in the International Building Code in the 1970s as the adaptable dwelling unit. It is not required by either the 2010 American Disabilities Act or Fair Housing Accessibility Guidelines, although it is sometimes required where an apartment complex receives federal funding. The Type A unit is between the accessible units and the Type A units for wheelchair access. While some elements, such as the doors, are constructed the same as the accessible units, Type A is designed to allow for some features to be modified/added based on the tenants' needs—such as adding grab bars in the bathrooms or being able to pull cabinets from under sinks to provide for a front approach.<sup>1</sup>

The Type B dwelling unit is intended to match the Fair Housing Accessibility Guidelines. Type B units are more about homes for life or aging in place—they are usable by a person in a wheelchair, but not wheelchair friendly. For example, the doors within the units are wide enough for a person using a walker

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.iccsafe.org/building-safety-journal/bsj-technical/alphabet-soup-for-dwelling-and-sleeping-units-2/#:~:text=The%20Type%20A%20unit%20went,provide%20for%20a%20front%20approach.>

or wheelchair to get through the door, but there are no requirements for maneuvering clearances, lever hardware, etc. Only the front door is required to meet the higher accessibility requirements.<sup>2</sup>

It is estimated that the population of older adults will increase from 40 million to 89 million between 2010 and 2050. That means older adults will go from making up 13 percent of the population to 20 percent of the estimated population. As a result, demand for more housing that is suitable for older adults is expected to increase. In Rhode Island, it is expected that 1 out of every 4 residents will be 65 or older by 2030, while adults living with disabilities account for 13 percent of the total state population, versus 12 percent nationally.

Rhode Island is experiencing a housing crisis, and it is weighing heavily on older adults who want to age in their own community. Indeed, AARP's 2023 Long Term Services and Supports Scorecard ranked Rhode Island 51<sup>st</sup>, or dead last, of all the states for the availability of housing for older adults. The lack of accessible housing in our state will become an even larger problem as our population continues to age. The Livable Home Modification grant program is a great example of the demand for accessible housing in Rhode Island. Since its inception the Livable Home Modification Grant program has awarded over 1,000 grants to Rhode Island homeowners with accessibility needs. House Bill 7564 would create the housing types that our state desperately needs. For this reason, AARP Rhode Island urges you to recommend passage on House Bill 7564. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Matt Netto  
Associate State Director, AARP Rhode Island

## Livable Homes by the Numbers

State FY	# of Grants Paid	Livable Homes Total Cost (Grants + Admin)	Amount Paid in Grants	Average payment amount
2022	171	501,259	459,037	2,579
2023	182	548,178	502,292	2,760
2024	221	686,086	645,294	2,920
2025	259	820,224	780,715	3,014
2026 Q1+Q2	140	457,560	438,926	3,136

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.iccsafe.org/building-safety-journal/bsj-technical/alphabet-soup-for-dwelling-and-sleeping-units-2/#:~:text=The%20Type%20A%20unit%20went,provide%20for%20a%20front%20approach.>

