



STATE of RHODE ISLAND
Executive Department
GOVERNOR'S COMMISSION ON DISABILITIES
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Legislative Impact Statement

To: Representative Stephen M. Casey, Chair
House Committee on Municipal Government and Housing
From: Elisabeth Hubbard, Executive Secretary
Re: 26 House 7564 AN ACT RELATING TO TOWNS AND CITIES – HOME FIT DWELLING UNITS
26 HOUSE 8021 AN ACT RELATING TO HEALTH AND SAFETY -- STATE BUILDING CODE -- RHODE ISLAND INCLUSIVE HOME DESIGN ACT

Tuesday, March 17, 2026

The Governor's Commission on Disabilities' Legislation Committee has developed a Legislative Impact Statement on the bill listed below. The Commission would be pleased to present testimony to the committee. Please contact me (462-01110) if testimony is desired or for additional information.

The Commission finds these bills beneficial.

Accessible housing provides a home where a person with a disability can live independently and safely because of the existing features. These include entrances without steps, grab bars in the bathrooms, roll/walk-in showers, countertops and light switches that are at a height to be usable by someone using a wheelchair, doorways wide enough to accommodate a wheelchair, and many other features that allow someone to live independently if they have a mobility or other impairment.

Without accessible housing, a person with a mobility impairment faces the high likelihood of a fall, injury, hospitalization, or institutionalization. Lack of accessible housing also forces people to remain an unnecessarily long time in nursing facilities. Those who are ready to be discharged have a lack of options for safe, accessible places to live. The state has an obligation to ensure that people with disabilities have the ability to live in the community under the Olmstead v. Curtis decision. It is also in the state's interest as paying for individuals to live in an institution as not only does that harm people's independence, but it is also costlier in the long-run for the state.

According to the CDC, 12.5% of the US population 18 and over have a mobility-related disability that results in serious difficulty walking or climbing stairs.ⁱ According to the Administration for

Community Living, for the US population 65 and older, that percentage is 21%.ⁱⁱ With these high percentages, we should be looking to greatly increase the amount of accessible housing.

The Commission has worked to try to increase the availability of accessible housing through our Livable Homes Program. Our program paid out 259 grants last year to help people make modifications to their homes so they could safely live there with their disability. We know the demand is much higher.

Rhode Island is working towards increasing the amount of affordable housing in the state. While we move forward in this, we should also be ensuring that we provide an adequate amount of accessible housing to meet the needs of our state's population.

ⁱ <https://www.cdc.gov/disability-and-health/articles-documents/disability-impacts-all-of-us-infographic.html#:~:text=12.2%20percent%20of%20U.S.%20adults,with%20difficulty%20doing%20errands%20alone.>

ⁱⁱ https://acl.gov/sites/default/files/Profile%20of%20OA/ACL_ProfileOlderAmericans2023_508.pdf