

2026 Testimony for the RI Inclusive Home Design Act  
House Committee on Housing and Municipal Government  
3/17/2026 - House Lounge  
Bill H-8021

Sponsors: Stewart, Tanzi, Handy, Cruz, Morales, Potter, Speakman, Spears

I'm writing in support of House bill 8021, the Rhode Island Inclusive Home Design Act.

The Inclusive Home Design Act promotes the construction of homes that are more accessible—such as homes with zero-step entrances, wider doorways, and accessible bathrooms—ensuring that people with physical limitations can live independently. This can significantly improve the quality of life by reducing the barriers that often keep them from living in their own homes or fully participating in their communities.

In particular, women are more likely to be caregivers for children, elderly family members, or spouses with disabilities. Homes designed with universal accessibility can make caregiving tasks more manageable. Features like accessible bathrooms and ramps help caregivers care for their loved ones with greater ease and safety.

For those who have mobility issues themselves, having a home built with inclusive features means they are less likely to be forced into institutional care, and can stay in their own home. By ensuring that homes are designed to be accessible, the Inclusive Home Design Act supports economic empowerment. Those who have mobility issues or disabilities may be more economically dependent if they are unable to work or care for themselves due to inaccessible living spaces. Accessible homes can reduce this dependence, helping them remain employed, maintain social connections, and stay in their own homes without needing costly institutional care.

The ability to "age in place"—staying in one's home as they grow older—becomes more viable with homes designed for accessibility. By ensuring new homes are built with accessibility in mind, the Inclusive Home Design Act helps people stay in their homes longer, preserving their autonomy and dignity in later years.

The costs to make traditional homes accessible for those with mobility challenges can cost in the tens of thousands, while building accessible homes can have a very minor impact on cost - estimates are less than \$1,000 to do this.

As we all have heard, Rhode Island and much of the country is facing a housing crisis. This crisis is felt even more so for disabled people, or those caring for a family member with a mobility challenge as the housing supply that could accommodate the ANSI standard designs this bill would provide, are very few and far between. If we are going to spend federal or state tax dollars on housing, we should make sure that all Rhode Islanders facing mobility challenges can live there and visit others in those homes.

I want to make the point that building housing that meets these standards will make these homes available to those with mobility issues but also those without. If you build an entrance with steps, those who can scale steps can get in. But if you build an entrance with a ramp, those who can AND cannot scale steps can use it - it doesn't stop anyone.

To address one of the questions about would people want to buy these homes - the answer is overwhelmingly yes. They would not deter anyone from buying a home in fact make it more desirable . As someone who has made over-asking price offers on at least 5 properties to get outbid - I can personally attest to how wanted they are. Builders know these homes are highly desirable.

We hope that you will strongly consider passing this legislation this year. We appreciate the Rhode Island House making a commitment to new housing, and we hope that you can help make this housing available to everyone.

Thank you.  
Jeanine Calkin