



April 9, 2026 2026

Dear Chair Bissaillon and Members, Senate Housing and Municipal Government Committee

Re: Support for S2584

SACRI is pleased to support S2584 BY Senators Bissaillon, Burke and Gu ENTITLED, AN ACT RELATING TO TOWNS AND CITIES -- HOME-FIT DWELLING UNITS

The mission of the Senior Agenda Coalition is to advocate for policies and programs that improve the quality of life of older Rhode Islanders. Addressing housing challenges for older adults is a priority for SACRI and our Coalition appreciates the tremendous effort that members of the legislature are putting into finding solutions to our housing crisis.

S2584 creates a new Chapter in state law, “Home-Fit Dwelling Units”, that applies to new construction of (4) or more units receiving state financial assistance. At a minimum, it requires that 10% of units meet Type A ANSI accessibility standards and 25% must meet Type B standards. This would mean that 10% of units would be fully accessible with step-free entrances, wider doorways, accessible bathrooms and grab bar reinforcements and 25% will be adaptable, allowing future modifications for better accessibility.

Our state has an extremely old housing stock. Much of this housing lacks accessibility features needed by persons with ambulatory difficulties. Persons age 65 and over comprise one out of five persons in RI and their numbers are projected to continue to grow to one out of four by 2030. Census data shows 19 percent of RI older adults with a self-reported ambulatory difficulty which can make persons more prone to falls in housing with outside stairs for access and stairs inside multi-level homes. As the older population continues to grow, we can expect the numbers with ambulatory difficulties needing walkers and wheelchairs to increase along with the need for more accessible housing. There is also a critical need for accessible housing for younger persons with mobility challenges. The bill contains an important provision to seek a waiver upon a written finding that compliance is technically infeasible due to site conditions, structural constraints, or topographical limitations, and not solely due to increased cost or reduced profitability.

Many older households wish to relocate to smaller homes or to move to rental units. However, it is challenging to find accessible homes or accessible apartments for rent that are both affordable and accessible. There are long wait lists of 3 to 5 years for subsidized housing units with accessible features for low-income older adults and persons with disabilities. As the state invests millions of dollars developing affordable housing it is important that the needs of older adults and persons with disabilities are recognized by incorporating accessibility features into new housing developments.

There are several bills relating to accessible housing under consideration. We strongly urge the legislature to pass a bill this year to increase accessible housing options for our growing older population and persons with mobility needs. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Carol Costa, SACRI Executive Director
Maureen Maigret, Policy Advisor