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Testimony in Support of SB 2584 – Home-Fit Dwelling Units Act

Dr. Isaac Mawuko Adusu

Assistant Vice President, Seven Hills Foundation Rhode Island

Chairperson and Members of the Senate Committee:

Good evening. My name is Dr. Isaac Mawuko Adusu, Assistant Vice President at Seven Hills Foundation in Rhode Island. I oversee services supporting individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, behavioral health needs, and complex care challenges. I am here in strong support of Senate Bill 2584 — the Home-Fit Dwelling Units Act. This bill is fundamentally about access, dignity, and preparing Rhode Island for current and future housing needs.

So, I will go straight to the point:

- According to data provided by the CDC, over **28% of U.S. adults live with a disability**, and in Rhode Island alone, **nearly 1 in 4 residents** reports a disability.
- Also, according to Rhode Island Office of Healthy Ageing, by 2030, **all baby boomers will be over age 65**, which is going to significantly increase demand for accessible housing.
- Yet **fewer than 5% of homes are accessible**, and less than **1% are wheelchair accessible** nationwide. This gap has real consequences.

Individuals are often forced into institutional settings—not because they need that level of care, but because housing is inaccessible. Families face costly retrofits, and the state incurs higher Medicaid costs due to avoidable institutional care.

This Bill offers a practical solution by requiring that in new, state-supported multi-unit housing:

- **10% of units meet Type A accessibility standards**, and
- **25% meet Type B standards**

This is a modest, strategic requirement. Research shows that incorporating accessibility in new construction typically adds only **1–2% in cost**, while retrofitting later can cost **5 to 10 times more**.

From my professional experience, lack of accessible housing is one of the greatest barriers to community integration. It leads to delayed hospital discharges, long waitlists, family strain, and workforce challenges.

By contrast, accessible housing:

- Promotes independence
- Improves health outcomes
- Reduces system costs and
- Ultimately strengthens communities

Importantly, this bill includes reasonable flexibility, allowing waivers only when compliance is technically not feasible, not simply due to cost concerns.

The bill aligns with federal disability rights principles and Rhode Island's commitment to community-based care.

In closing, this bill is a cost-effective, forward-looking investment in equity, independence, and system sustainability.

It is my wish that you consider SB 2584.

Respectfully! Thank you!