

In 2015 the United Nations agency on urban development – known as UN Habitat – commissioned me to write a report on adequate housing for persons with disabilities. That report turned into a short 135-page book that focused on seven elements that the UN considers as essential for all housing, not just for persons with disabilities, but for all persons.

- Security of tenure
- Affordability
- Location (i.e. not near hazardous lands, access to transport, green spaces, etc.)
- Proximity to materials, goods, services
- Accessibility
- Inhabitability (appropriate size and internal features such as heating, cooling, and water)
- Cultural adequacy

As you'll note, one of the elements is accessibility. The UN recognized, as far back as the 1990s, that everyone (not just persons with disabilities) has the right to accessible housing, because accessible housing benefits everyone: not only persons with disabilities, their families and friends, but also older persons, who may or may not identify as "disabled," parents of young children, and persons who are not disabled, but may acquire a disability later in life.

House Bill 2889 does represent real progress but does not go far enough to ensure that persons with disabilities are given what they need to realize their right to housing. In particular:

1. Definitions of key terms need to be added to HB 2889, including the terms "person with a disability", and "universal design." This is especially important given the diversity of the disability community, both in terms of types of impairments and other demographic attributes.
2. While the ADA references the right to reasonable accommodation, and the Fair Housing Act refers to both reasonable accommodation and reasonable modification, these concepts are poorly understood within the housing sector. HB 2889 would be stronger if these concepts were explained, and explanations could be provided on their relevance so local jurisdictions would be better equipped and engage more effectively the disability community.
3. Housing strategies [HB 2889, section 21 (5)(a)] should include information on disability status (phrase in bold added) as they present the "Socioeconomic and demographic characteristics, **including disability status**, of households living in existing needed housing;"
4. Reporting requirements (HB 2889, sections 29-31) particularly relevant for tracking progress toward the development of more accessible housing should be added. Suggestions include:
 - a. Percentage of households that include a person with a disability whose housing lacks necessary accessibility features;
 - b. The total number of complete applications received for development of housing containing one or more housing units that are accessible units as defined in ORS 197.286, as part of a local, state or federal housing assistance program.

Thank you for your consideration,

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