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Chair Pham, Vice Chair Anderson, and members of the committee:

My name is Allen Hines, and I am the Housing Access Director at Community Vision.

Thank you for considering SB 1576, which seeks to improve the odds for people with disabilities and older adults to find accessible housing. At this committee's informational hearing in January, I shared that OHCS and Census data suggest that as little as 0.3% of Oregon's housing is accessible. I compared this to the one in ten Oregonians who has trouble walking and the millions more who will become older adults by 2050.

Today, I'm asking you to take action to reduce this dramatic and widening gap by moving SB 1576 forward. The bill would require 10% of units built with state funds to meet the Uniform Federal Accessibility Standard. It would also require 10% of units in newly constructed buildings of 15 or more units to meet the state building codes' Type A standard.

Making sure our state can meet everyone's housing needs will require many tools, and SB 1576 is not a panacea. But it addresses the root cause of housing instability for our community: that is, there are simply far too few accessible homes.

At the informational hearing, Chair Pham raised an important question about how we match people with disabilities to accessible units. Her question underscores the daily reality facing people who have trouble walking when they search for housing. Even if we had a perfect matching system—and even if every accessible unit were always occupied by someone who needs it—we still only have one accessible home for every 66 Oregonians who have trouble walking.

That is why our coalition of housing and disability advocates has led with this bill. We know additional strategies are needed, including clarifying requirements to affirmatively advertise accessible units and follow HUD guidance to transfer an able-bodied tenant when a qualified tenant with disabilities needs that home. And we welcome further discussion about European-style compact elevators, which could open the door to more accessible living options in four- and five-story buildings.

But SB 1576 represents a concrete action the Legislature can take this session to begin closing the gap. It sets an achievable, morally grounded expectation that all Oregonians can live in a home that meets their needs.

I urge you to advance SB 1576. Thank you.