

Submitter: Nico Serra

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Housing and Development

Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB1576

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

My name is Nico Serra, and I live in Portland. I am writing today in strong support of SB 1576, which would increase the number of accessible homes available to Oregonians with disabilities and older adults.

Across Oregon, accessible housing is extremely difficult to find. Many homes have steps, narrow doorways, or bathrooms that cannot be used safely by people with mobility challenges. For those who have trouble walking—and for the growing number of older adults in our state—these barriers can make it nearly impossible to find a place to live. In my 15 years living in Portland, I have been unable to find accessible housing, which has complicated my health conditions.

To give an example, in 2015, my doctor prescribed me a power wheelchair. This was huge for me because I had struggled to walk for years at that point. But when I tried to get my chair, I learned I couldn't have it I didn't have a ramp to get it inside my home. My roommate and I found a somewhat accessible route through our often muddy backyard, and we did our best to build a makeshift ramp. But when the wheelchair supplier looked at the ramp, he told me it wasn't up to code and that it was, in fact, dangerous. Out of concern for my safety, the wheelchair supplier could not give me the wheelchair I was prescribed because my home wasn't accessible enough.

SB 1576 takes a practical and much-needed step forward by requiring that new housing include a higher percentage of units built to recognized accessibility standards. This will gradually increase the supply of homes that people with disabilities can actually use, and it will help ensure that Oregon's housing stock reflects the real needs of our population.

Improved accessibility promotes fairness, dignity, and the ability for every Oregonian to live safely and independently. SB 1576 helps address the root problem: there are far too few accessible homes available today.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge you to pass SB 1576.

Thank you for your consideration and for your commitment to addressing Oregon's housing needs.