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February 5, 2026

To: Senate Committee on Housing and Development

Re: SB 1576 - The Accessible Housing Act

Chair Pham, Vice Chair Anderson, and Members of the Committee,

For the record, my name is Kevin Cronin, and I serve as the Director of Policy and Advocacy at Housing Oregon. Housing Oregon is a statewide industry association representing more than 145 mission-driven organizations working to ensure Oregonians have access to safe, stable, and affordable housing. Our members include nonprofit housing developers, housing authorities, architects, lenders, service providers, and advocates operating in urban, rural, and frontier communities across the state.

I am here today in strong support of Senate Bill 1576, the Accessible Housing Act. Housing Oregon's members reviewed this bill through our endorsement process and voted to support it because it addresses a long-standing structural gap in Oregon's housing system and does so in a way that reflects years of collaboration, refinement, and practical experience.

Oregon faces a critical shortage of accessible housing. Roughly one in four people lives with a disability, and mobility limitations affect millions of Oregonians, yet only a very small share of our housing stock is wheelchair accessible. That mismatch leaves people with disabilities and older adults with few real choices. Too often, people are forced to remain in unsafe housing, enter institutional settings earlier than necessary, or cycle through homelessness because the housing simply does not meet their needs. SB 1576 responds directly to that reality by setting clearer expectations for accessibility in new multifamily housing and in housing built with public dollars.

As an industry association, part of Housing Oregon's role is to be a cheerleader for what is possible. We lift up strong projects, encourage learning across organizations, and promote the cross-pollination of ideas. We do this because housing challenges are not confined to a single project type, funding source, or jurisdiction, and neither are the solutions.

Across Oregon, our members are already building housing that prioritizes accessibility and inclusion. Wynne Watts Commons, developed by Albertina Kerr, includes 30 universally accessible units within a 150-unit affordable housing community, pairing accessibility with energy efficiency and long-term affordability. In Senator Nash's district, Pendleton South Hill Commons demonstrates how accessibility can be thoughtfully integrated into rural and small-city development contexts.

We also intentionally lift up work happening just beyond Oregon's borders when it is led by Oregon-based members and offers lessons for our state. Fruit Valley Commons, located in Vancouver, Washington, is one such example. While the project itself is not in Oregon, it was designed by Access Architecture, a Housing Oregon member, and developed by Fourth Plain Forward. We highlight projects like this because housing markets and resident needs do not stop at state lines. The design expertise, construction strategies, and accessibility solutions developed there directly inform how housing is built here.

Other member firms, including Bora Architecture and Pinnacle Architecture, have been leaders in trauma-informed and disability-informed design, helping establish best practices that center safety, dignity, and long-term usability. Through our partnership with the Kuni Foundation, Housing Oregon also recognizes this leadership via the Kuni Foundation Innovation Award for Inclusive Housing. In 2024, Community Vision was honored for its work advancing affordable, accessible, and environmentally responsible accessory dwelling units.

These examples matter because they demonstrate something important for this Committee to understand: developers already exist who are building housing under accessibility expectations like those contemplated in SB 1576. At the same time, we want to be clear and honest. Every project is different. Site conditions vary. Financing stacks vary. Local codes vary. Building typologies vary. SB 1576 will add costs to some developments. We do not deny that reality.

We still believe the bill is necessary.

Accessible housing is not an add-on or a specialty feature. It is core housing infrastructure. When accessibility is planned from the beginning, it avoids far more expensive retrofits later, reduces displacement, and allows people to remain housed as their needs change over time. The alternative is a housing system that quietly excludes people with disabilities and older adults, shifting costs onto families, service systems, and public institutions down the line.

It is also important to note that SB 1576 is not a static or rushed policy. Our members worked diligently with Disability Rights Oregon and Community Vision throughout and following SB 444 to improve the bill. SB 1576 reflects that work. It provides clearer alignment with federal Fair Housing Act requirements, more predictable standards and better coordination between the Department of Consumer and Business Services and the Housing and Community Services Department. That clarity matters for implementation, underwriting, and long-term success.

As Oregon's population ages, the demand for accessible housing will only increase. SB 1576 helps ensure that when the state invests public resources in housing, we are building homes that work not just for the first tenant, but for the next resident and the next decade as well.

Housing Oregon supports SB 1576 because it reflects both our values and our practical experience. It acknowledges cost realities, builds on existing expertise, and moves Oregon toward a housing system that better serves people with disabilities and older adults.

Thank you for your time and for your thoughtful consideration. I urge your support for Senate Bill 1576.

Sincerely,

Kevin Cronin

Director, Policy and Advocacy

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