

Submitter: Megan Howard
On Behalf Of: Tandem Property Management
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 Megan Howard, and I am an owner of Tandem Property Management, Inc., a local, family-owned multifamily housing provider and developer based in Portland with communities throughout the Portland metro area. Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony on SB 1576.

I want to begin by acknowledging and supporting the goal of this bill. Expanding access to housing for people with disabilities, including ensuring the availability of fully accessible (Type A) units, is an important and shared objective. Housing providers want to serve residents with a wide range of needs and ensure housing is safe, usable, and inclusive.

At the same time, I am concerned that SB 1576, as drafted, moves toward highly prescriptive requirements that may significantly increase development costs and constrain housing production. The bill directs changes to the state building code to incorporate expanded accessibility standards and conditions state funding for subsidized housing on meeting those standards. While well-intended, this approach raises concerns similar to those discussed last session with SB 444, particularly around feasibility and cost.

Housing providers are not opposed to building more Type A units or expanding accessible housing options. However, accessibility needs vary widely, and mandating fixed unit configurations without clear data demonstrating demand risks increasing costs across an entire project while producing units that may not align with actual renter needs.

When accessibility requirements exceed demonstrated demand, those costs reduce overall housing feasibility. This can result in fewer units being built, higher rents across a project, or developments that do not move forward at all.

For these reasons, I urge the Legislature to consider a more flexible and effective alternative: allowing a defined percentage of units to be designed as adaptable units rather than mandating a fixed increase in permanently configured Type A units.

Adaptable units are designed from the outset to allow building owners to efficiently modify features such as grab bars, cabinetry, bathroom and kitchen layouts, and clearances based on a resident's needs. This approach provides meaningful accessibility while recognizing that disabilities and accessibility requirements differ

from person to person.

This flexibility supports accessibility, preserves dignity and choice for residents, and helps maintain project feasibility, while ensuring resources are targeted where they are most needed.

In closing, while I share the intent behind SB 1576, I respectfully ask the committee to reconsider the current approach and work toward a solution that balances accessibility, flexibility, and housing feasibility. I would support legislation that expands accessibility through adaptable design while continuing to encourage the production of much-needed housing across Oregon.

I'm more than happy to discuss this further if that's helpful to the committee.

Thank you for your time and consideration!

Megan Howard