

February 22, 2022

House Housing Finance and Policy Committee

Re: Support for HF 2695

Chair Hausman and Members of the Committee,

We are writing to express support for HF 2695 (Reyer; companion SF 2603, Duckworth) which works to address the critical lack of affordable, accessible, inclusive housing for people with disabilities in Minnesota. Similar to the work of disability advocate, Judy Moe, in the City of Richfield, this legislation will address physical and sensory barriers in housing. This legislation would ensure that projects utilizing housing infrastructure bonds include units that are truly accessible for people with disabilities – including veterans and older adults.

Currently, the building code for the most accessible housing units still makes a roll-in shower optional. For people with disabilities who use a wheelchair, this makes finding truly accessible housing nearly impossible. For people with sensory accessibility needs, many housing projects do not currently have sensory accessible features. This eliminates many choices in housing for people with disabilities, and despite their desire to live in their own home, they may have to turn to a less independent, provider-controlled housing option due to the lack of affordable, accessible housing in the community.

The housing crisis is exacerbated for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC), veterans, and the fast-growing aging population. BIPOC, veterans, and older adults have a higher prevalence of disabilities than the general population, so the need for affordable, accessible, inclusive housing options is even more critical for them.

When we use state dollars to build housing, we must ensure we are building housing that works for all people. This legislation creates a shared definition of accessibility and supports developers and builders to create more inclusive homes in Minnesota.

Please support HF 2695 to ensure Minnesotans with accessibility needs can find affordable housing that is also truly accessible.

Sincerely,

ACCRA Homecare
Amherst H. Wilder Foundation
Autism Society of Minnesota
Catholic Charities of St. Paul & Minneapolis
Homes for All Coalition
Mid-Minnesota Legal Aid/Minnesota Disability Law Center
Minnesota Autistic Alliance
Minnesota Brain Injury Alliance

Minnesota Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities
Minnesota Council on Disability
Minnesota Social Service Association
Multicultural Autism Action Network
Proof Alliance
Richfield Disability Advocacy Partnership
The Arc Minnesota
The Arc Northland