



April 8, 2025

Honorable Representative Stephen Casey
Chair, Housing and Municipal Government Committee

Re: Bill-H - 5268
Home Fit Design Bill

Representative Casey and Committee Members;

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on H- 5268.

As the Executive Director of SWAP, Inc. a non - profit community development corporation in Providence celebrating its 50th anniversary this year, we provide the following testimony in support of H – 5268.

In addition to being the Director of one of the oldest CDCs in the State developing affordable housing, I am also the parent of an adult child with Intellectual and Development Disabilities. Drawing on our experience with affordable housing and my personal connection, SWAP, in 2021 began working with Looking Upwards in the development of affordable housing designed for the very same purpose this Bill and its sponsors seek to achieve.

The re-purposing of a former commercial building into 12 affordable, accessible apartments in Jamestown is nearing completion and will "cut the Ribbon" in early June. The vision of Looking Upwards; the passion of the SWAP Team; the commitment of the funding agencies and the Town of Jamestown set out to create a PILOT to prove that affordable and accessible rental housing could be developed despite the obstacles in the way.

Using the PILOT as the base, SWAP is replicating the model in a new development on the West Side of Providence in a 41 Unit building where 9 of the units are set aside for individuals with IDD. West Bay RI is our partner in providing resident referrals and supportive services. Construction will begin in June.

SWAP is committed to expanding the availability of accessible housing in Rhode Island and is in the pre-development stage of a 3rd rental housing using the same PILOT.

SWAP has been in contact with the Bill Sponsors with suggested changes making it more focused and achievable within the context of current Building Codes already addressing many of the points. We have also made suggestions to streamline the approval process in order not to delay inclusion of more fully handicap (Type A) units in all newly constructed buildings with more than 20 units and an elevator.

SWAP, Inc. conditionally supports H – 5268 with our and other recommended changes.

Carla DeStefano
Executive Director

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Carla DeStefano", is written over the typed name and title.