

City of Philadelphia



Council of the City of Philadelphia
Office of the Chief Clerk
Room 402, City Hall
Philadelphia

(Resolution No. 150028)

RESOLUTION

Authorizing Council's Committee on the Disabled and Special Needs to hold public hearings regarding the state of housing in Philadelphia for people with physical, psychiatric, sensory, intellectual and developmental disabilities.

WHEREAS, Independence and integration are among the most important values and goals shared by people with disabilities, their families and advocates. A home of one's own, either rented or owned, is the cornerstone of independence for people with disabilities; and

WHEREAS, When a person with a disability has a decent, safe and affordable home, then he or she has the opportunity to become part of the community. With stable housing, people with disabilities are able to achieve other important life goals, including education, job training, and employment; and

WHEREAS, Across the United States people with disabilities, face a severe housing crisis. This crisis is due to several factors including: affordability, accessibility, aging caregivers, housing discrimination and availability; and

WHEREAS, The affordability gap for people with disabilities has exponentially worsened in recent years. Over 4.8 million non-institutionalized Americans with disabilities who rely on federal monthly Supplemental Security Income (SSI) have incomes less than \$8,700 per year, low enough to be priced out of every rental housing market in the nation. In 2012, the average rent for a one-bedroom apartment was \$758 per month – or 104% of the national average monthly SSI income for beneficiaries living independently. Because of their limited incomes, people with disabilities need more rent subsidy funding and down-payment assistance than low-income working families; and

WHEREAS, An accessible home offers specific features or technologies to accommodate people with disabilities, such as lowered kitchen counters and sinks, widened doorways, wheel-in showers, raised electrical outlets, and smoke alarms with flashing strobe lights.

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For people who use wheelchairs or other mobility devices, finding housing with even basic accessibility features (e.g. an entrance with no steps) ranges from daunting to impossible. In addition, accessible units can be very costly to rent or purchase; and

WHEREAS, Across the United States, over 850,000 people with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (I/DD) live with an aging caregiver (over age 60). As this generation of caregivers continues to age, many of their adult children with I/DD may be at risk of institutionalization or homelessness due to the shortage of housing and support services; and

WHEREAS, People with disabilities all too often face discrimination when seeking housing. In fact, complaints by people with disabilities often make up the majority of discrimination complaints received by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development's Fair Housing Enforcement Office. Multiple federal laws prohibit discrimination against people with disabilities in public and privately funded housing; and

WHEREAS, The supply of affordable, accessible housing remains far less than the need; and

WHEREAS, A 2000 study by the University of Pennsylvania placed the number of disabled in need of housing in this region at 59,000; and

WHEREAS, Philadelphia has 354,409 people ages 5 and older with disabilities; and

WHEREAS, The Philadelphia Housing Authority (PHA) owns and operates over 13,400 housing units in Philadelphia. Their units are generally in high-rise complexes, garden apartments or townhouses. Some are part of large developments, others are individual units scattered throughout the City. Over 500 are fully accessible for people with mobility impairments. As a federally-funded agency, PHA is subject to meeting the "reasonable accommodation" requirement. This means that a person with a disability is entitled to file a request for an accommodation (i.e. wheelchair ramp, modified kitchen, etc.) and the PHA must pay for the modification if the request is found valid; and

WHEREAS, Despite all the barriers identified above, a few states and communities are making real headway in expanding affordable housing for people with disabilities. In these localities, housing officials are responding to the sustained housing advocacy efforts of the disability community and are implementing innovative and collaborative affordable housing strategies benefiting people with disabilities; and

WHEREAS, The specific approaches adopted in local communities vary, depending on circumstances and opportunities. However, two common elements are present in the most successful efforts. First, the creative use of all available affordable housing programs to expand home ownership and rental housing options; and second, strong partnerships and

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collaborations between the affordable housing system and the disability community; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That the Committee on the Disabled and Special Needs is hereby authorized to hold public hearings regarding the state of housing in Philadelphia for people with disabilities.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That in furtherance of such investigation, the Committee is hereby authorized to issue subpoenas as may be necessary or appropriate to compel the attendance of witnesses and the production of documents to the full extent authorized under Section 2-401 of the Philadelphia Home Rule Charter.

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CERTIFICATION: This is a true and correct copy of the original Resolution, Adopted by the Council of the City of Philadelphia on the twenty-second day of January, 2015.

Darrell L. Clarke
PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL

Michael A. Decker
CHIEF CLERK OF THE COUNCIL

Introduced by: Councilmember O'Brien

Sponsored by: Councilmembers O'Brien, Goode, Bass, Greenlee, Tasco, Council President Clarke, Councilmembers Oh, Kenney, Johnson, Jones, Neilson, O'Neill, Squilla and Henon