



# The Ability Center

## **Proponent Testimony House Bill 498 House Aging and Long Term-Care Committee**

Chairman Ginter, Vice-Chair Swearingen, and Ranking Member Howse, The Ability Center of Greater Toledo provides this written testimony in support of Ohio House Bill 498.

The Ability Center of Greater Toledo is a Center for Independent Living (CIL) serving Northwest Ohio. As a CIL, we provide six core services that include advocacy, information and referral, independent living skills, peer support, and mentoring, transition, and diversion to support those who live in our community to thrive independently. The Ability Center advocates, educates, partners, and provides services supporting people with disabilities to thrive within their community. We serve Lucas, Ottawa, Wood, Fulton, Henry, Defiance, and Williams counties. Our vision is to make our region the most disability-friendly community in the nation.

A key component of ensuring that people with disabilities can live independently is ensuring that they have access to accessible housing or the resources necessary to retrofit an inaccessible home. In Ohio, like most other states, there is currently no component of the residential building code that requires new construction homes to have accessible features incorporated into their design. The only stipulation is that if a homebuilder in Ohio decides to include an accessibility feature then that feature must comply with the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) Standard for accessibility.

Historically, there has been a low level of support from homebuilders and their associations for incorporating more accessibility standards into the Residential Building code. Therefore, it makes sense that other methods of promoting accessible design are necessary. A disability tax credit is one of the steps that can be taken and, generally speaking, does not elicit opposition from the homebuilders and their associations.

It is important to take a moment to note a few separate reasons this bill is so important to the disability and aging community:

- Half of the working age adults experiencing income poverty have a disability<sup>1</sup>
- Living with a disability can be highly expensive depending on the disability<sup>2</sup>
  - The credit could help offset the massive expenses living with a disability can incur, the money saved from this credit could be used to pay for further schooling, a trip to visit family, or a myriad of other important expenditures.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.cepr.net/documents/publications/poverty-disability-2009-09.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.dominickevans.com/2015/06/life-with-a-disability-is-seriously-expensive/>



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- Only 3.76% of housing meets HUD’s standard for being livable for people with disabilities and only 0.15% of the housing stock is wheelchair accessible.<sup>3</sup> Meanwhile ~6.8% of the U.S. is considered to have an ambulatory disability.<sup>4</sup>
  - However, 33.34% of the housing stock is considered to be modifiable to be more accessible. The tax credit would help people who are above the income threshold for other assistance programs but for whom paying for home modifications out of pocket may still be difficult.
- 2.6% of people within the U.S. have difficulty taking care of themselves due to disability and 5.6% of the population have difficulty living independently.<sup>5</sup>
  - The credit could help offset the cost of getting necessary assistive technology, a personal care attendant, or adult daycare while their primary caretaker is at work. People with disabilities sometimes need additional care and providing a tax credit to offset that cost is an overall good thing for the population at large.

The Ability Center of Greater Toledo believes that Ohio House Bill 498 is a step in the right direction to increase the ability of people with disabilities to live independently within the community of their choosing. We support this bill and encourage the Ohio House of Representatives to pass the bill as soon as possible. We would like to thank Rep. Mark Frazier for introducing the bill and hope to continue to see the Ohio House of Representatives consider the needs of people with disabilities and the needs of the aging community.

Sincerely,

James Russell  
Disability Rights Advocate – Housing & Transportation  
The Ability Center of Greater Toledo

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/sites/default/files/pdf/accessibility-america-housingStock.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/all?q=Disability&hidePreview=false&tid=ACSST1Y2018.S1810&t=Disability>

<sup>5</sup>

<https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=Disability&hidePreview=false&tid=ACSST1Y2018.S1810&t=Disability&vintage=2018>