

Fund Accessible Affordable Housing Grants (AAHG) at \$2.5 Million

Line Item #7004-9031, Amendment Number to be determined

Amendment filed by Representative Marjorie Decker

The Accessible Affordable Housing Grants (AAHG) offer developers and landlords grants to create or rehabilitate physically accessible housing. Recipients of these grants must prioritize Alternative Housing Voucher Program voucher holders in their tenant selection process. These funds are overseen by CEDAC (Community Economic Development Assistance Corporation).

Each grant of \$100,000 creates one permanently affordable, accessible unit targeted at those who need it most. So far, AAHG have been used in Lawrence, Bridgewater, Boston, Fitchburg, Great Barrington, Arlington and Rockland, with several more projects pending. It is important that this program is statewide so that people with disabilities have the opportunity to live in all parts of the state, staying close to their support systems and having the same choice in housing as able bodied people.

In FY22, the AAHG program was funded at \$2.5 million. The Governor's Budget and the House's current version of the budget cut the AAHG funds entirely. We are requesting the FY23 budget reinstate the program at \$2.5 million.

Current Major Concerns:

- People with disabilities are **more than twice as likely** as the nondisabled population to experience homelessness, and are at a significantly higher risk of experiencing housing insecurity.
- Even with an AHVP voucher, **accessible apartments are nearly impossible to find.**
- Most voucher holders spend several months searching for an acceptable unit. In a current pilot **most participants have had to ask for extensions** to the standard home search timeline.
- Once found, **competition for such units is high.** For every person who secures an apartment, dozens are turned away. One voucher holder contacted **over 100 units** before signing a lease.
- This is one of the issues that leads to low utilization rates for AHVP. **Rental vouchers are only helpful when there's somewhere to rent where you can get in the door.**

The Solution:

Co-Sponsor Representative Decker's Amendment to Reinstate #7004-9031 at \$2.5 million.

This will:

- Create 25 more accessible, affordable rental units targeted at AHVP voucher holders.
- Allow more people currently in nursing homes to regain their safety and freedom by moving them back into their communities so they can contribute and live full, meaningful lives.

Organizational Sponsors:

Ad Lib, Inc. (Pittsfield)

Boston Area Rape Crisis Center

Boston Center for Independent Living

Cape Organization for the Rights of the Disabled

Center for Living and Working, Inc. (Worcester)

Citizens Housing and Planning Association

Commonwealth Care Alliance

Disability Policy Consortium

Easter Seals of Massachusetts

Disability Resource Center (Salem)

Independence Associates (East Bridgewater)

Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless

MassADAPT

Metrowest Center for Independent Living

Northeast Independent Living Program, Inc. (Lawrence and Lowell)

Stavros (Amherst and Springfield)

