

Testimony of Daria F. Smith, Executive Director, CT State Independent Living Council

Support for HB 5372: An Act Concerning Accessible Housing

Committee on Housing, Thursday, March 4, 2010

The U.S. 2000 Census indicates that approximately 20 percent of the American population has a disability, and that by 2030 there will be over 70 million seniors. As our population ages, there is the likelihood of developing mobility limitations. Additionally, the growth in the number of people with disabilities can be expected to rise dramatically over the next twenty years. However, only a small percent of new single family and town house homes built with federal assistance require any access features that make it possible to accommodate people with physical disabilities or mobility limitations to live or visit.

The Connecticut State Independent Living Council, the statewide planning organization that promotes equal access opportunities for people with disabilities to live independently, wholeheartedly supports *Bill No. 5372: An Act Concerning Accessible Housing*. Visitability is a growing national trend and is an inclusive design approach that seeks to change inaccessibility into accessibility by meeting three specific essentials: 1.) No step entries; 2.) Doorways (with a 32 inch) and hallways (with a 42 inch) clear passage; and 3.) One bath on the main floor.

Visitability allows for housing that builds in adaptability and freedom for all. The three above essentials not only assist individuals live their lives more freely, but the universal design facilitates aging-in-place; supports community continuity, inclusion and sustainability and decreases housing discrimination.

Numerous municipalities and states across the country have already adopted Visitability standards to increase access to homes for friends, family and neighbors. The time has come for Connecticut to be part of this critically important building approach in order to better support its residents. Thank you.