



Stannah

February 23, 2016

To: General Law Committee

RE: Testimony in support of S.B. 191 – An Act Concerning Installers of Residential Stair Lifts

Senator Leone, Representative Baram and Members of the General Law Committee,

My name is Mike Charteris and I am the General Manager of Stannah Stairlifts Inc. I am joined by Ricky Adams, who is our Installation and Service Manager and a holder of an R5 license. We are here to speak in support of Senate Bill 191, An Act Concerning Installers of Residential Stair Lifts.

Stannah has been in business since 1867 and has been manufacturing stairlifts for more than 40 years. We have been selling and installing stairlifts in North America to the aging and disability community since 1992. We sell directly to the end user in the Northeast and through a network of dealers throughout the rest of the country. We do not sell or install any other products.

There are no licensing requirements for installation of private residence stairlifts in Maine, Vermont, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, New York or New Jersey. In Connecticut we are required to employ R5 and R6 license holders in order to install stairlifts. In addition to Mr. Adams, we currently employ 2 R6's.

Based on a recent report by The Connecticut Economic Resource Center, by 2025 Connecticut will be home to 1.3 million residents age 55 and older – or 35% of the State's population. Due to the aging population, the need for stairlifts continues to grow. In order to meet the customer demand we need to increase the number of installers we employ. The Review Board requires that installers should be experienced not only on stairlifts but also on inclined platform lifts and vertical platform lifts in order to sit the R6 exam. As previously stated, we do not install platform lifts and therefore our employees are denied the opportunity to take an examination, which would allow them to install stairlifts only. We are unable to employ existing R6 holders as there are so few of them and only a small number have sat to take the test in recent years: only 5 between 2012 and 2015. Further, the exam itself has only 2 questions on stairlifts out of more than 100. And lastly, many of the existing license holders are nearing retirement age, including our own employees, and therefore the number of R6's will further diminish in the near future.

All residential stairlifts are designed to meet the Federal Code ASME A18.1 for safety. They operate on low voltage DC battery power. Based on the ease of installation, there is no need to require an elevator license to install a residential stairlift. We believe that an individual registered in Connecticut as a Home Improvement Contractor can safely install a residential stairlift. The average installation takes about 3 hours and consists of fixing the rail to the stair treads, attaching the carriage to the rail and a chair to the carriage.

It is our view that without changes to the current regulations, it will be increasingly difficult to meet the needs of the aging and disability population in Connecticut.

Thank you for the opportunity to address the committee.

Stannah Stairlifts Inc.

45 Knollwood Road, Suite 103, Elmsford, NY 10523-2806

Phone: 914.345.8484 • Fax: 914.345.8488

www.StannahStairlifts.com



- Stannah Stairlift has requested to have their installers sit for the licensing exam in Connecticut, but have been denied because they do not have experience with platform lifts. (Stannah only installs stair lifts)
- The number of licensed installers cannot meet the demands of Connecticut's aging population.
- Because there is a lack of installers, and increased wait time for installation, consumers have the ability to purchase stair lifts online (in the secondary market) and install it themselves or have it installed by an unlicensed company. Both options pose safety issues.
- A licensed home improvement contractor has the skills required to install a stair lift safely, and provides the consumer access to the Home Improvement Guaranty Fund if necessary.
- Based on the ease of installation, there is no need to require an elevator license to install a residential stair lift. A typical stair lift takes approximately 3 hours of labor to install properly.
- The stair lift track is secured directly to the staircase (not the wall). Once installed, the lift is plugged into an existing electrical outlet and is powered by low voltage, rechargeable batteries.
- There is Federal Code (ASME 18.1) that governs design and safety requirements for residential stair lifts. All lifts installed in the United States must meet this standard.
- Approximately 50,000 stair lifts are installed in the U.S. each year. To date, there are no reported industry safety incidents that Stannah Stairlifts is aware of. (Ref. Stannah Stairlifts)
- In the Northeast, there are no licensing requirements for stair lift installers in Maine, Vermont, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, New York or New Jersey.