Federal Policy Changes to Increase Disability-Forward Housing

Disability-forward housing means creating communities that are affordable, accessible, integrated, and inclusive to people with and without disabilities. All solutions to advance disability-forward housing are and must be intersectional with economic and racial equity. Policies should create communities where people most impacted by racism and ableism have equitable opportunities to thrive in their own homes.

While interventions can support a disability-forward housing future at all levels of government and across all sections, the federal government has a critical role in this work. Ask your members of Congress to prioritize:

More Funding & Flexibility for Housing Choice Voucher Program

People with disabilities disproportionately live in poverty and therefore need help paying rent. There are not enough Housing Choice Vouchers to meet the current need, and it can be even more challenging for Disabled people to access vouchers, including if they are at risk of or currently living in an institution or congregate setting. Congress must increase funding for the Housing Choice Voucher program, especially the Mainstream Housing Voucher program and Non-Elderly Disabled Voucher programs. Congress must also work with the Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD) to decrease barriers that can keep disabled people from having equal access to currently available vouchers.

More Funding & Guidance for HUD Section 811 Program

There is a serious undersupply of housing that is affordable, accessible, and integrated for people with and without disabilities. Congress needs to substantially increase the funding for HUD Section 811, especially project-based rental assistance (PRA). It is critical to ensure usability of Section 811 along with other funding streams at the federal, state, and local levels.

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Strengthening the Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) Program
LIHTC is the main way that affordable housing gets paid for across the country. Currently, there are not enough tax credits available to pay for all the housing that is needed. Congress needs to increase the annual Housing Credit allocation by 50 percent, lower the bond financing threshold for receiving four percent Housing Credits and increase the amount of Housing Credits for developments serving extremely low-income (ELI) tenants. Congress can also add program incentives like preferences or basis boosts for integrated projects serving people with disabilities and/or for projects that go beyond minimum levels of accessibility.

Increasing Equitable Transit-Oriented Development (TOD): Through the Federal Transportation Administration (FTA), there have been significant investments in TOD, including the development of commercial, residential, office, and/or entertainment centered around or near a transit station. Members of Congress, especially those on committees that cover Transportation and Housing issues, can strengthen the program criteria for TOD to prioritize projects that go beyond the minimum code requirements for accessibility and provide extra levels of affordability.

Adding Incentives to Funding Criteria for New Affordable Housing: Every year, members of Congress introduce and/or sign on to legislation that seeks to strengthen federal affordable housing programs. For all programs within HUD that finance new production of affordable housing, advocates can ask their members of Congress to propose incentives be added to the programs' funding criteria that could incentivize applicants to go beyond minimum levels of accessibility, including using tools like The Housing Design Standards for Accessibility & Inclusion.

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More Medicaid Home & Community Based Services (HCBS): Advocates can also ask their members to support increased investment in the HCBS infrastructure, which means people with disabilities have the support they need in their own homes. Specifically, these investments ensure that people have access and can remain in their communities of choice and age in place. Programs in need of greater investment include Money Follows the Person and HCBS Medicaid waivers. In all programs, any funding related to support services should follow them as they transition to community-based, integrated housing. Moreover, HCBS funding increases must include an increase in HCBS “housing-related services”.

Please note: This is not an exhaustive list and will continue to be edited as the movement towards a disability-forward housing future continues.