

In brief, COVE is very concerned about H.629, as it could severely reduce access to upper floors of public buildings for elders and others who have mobility issues/disabilities. I recall from my work on downtown redevelopment legislation when I served on the Commerce Committee a number of years ago that upper levels of downtown buildings, whether old or new, are used for multiple purposes, including office space and rental apartments (at least some of which are considered affordable housing).

Many elders and people with disabilities who are of low income and cannot afford cars need to live close to downtown in order to easily access the goods and services they need. Cutting out their access to affordable, upper-floor apartments by allowing development without elevators makes no sense at all, especially given our aging society.

There are also many elders/people with disabilities in the work force who would be unable to access employment in upper story offices that lacked elevators.

Others can comment with more expertise on the technical aspects of this bill, its impact on development, and whether any accessibility laws might be violated by the bill, but based at least on the access issue, COVE would encourage the committee not to take any action on H.629 this year.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment, and if the committee would like me to attend your Friday morning discussion, I would be happy to oblige.

Gini

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