

Date: March 31, 2016
To: the House Committee on General, Housing and Military Affairs
From: Ed Paquin, VCDR President
Regarding: S.176

The Vermont Coalition for Disability Rights has long understood the growing need for accessible residential properties in the State of Vermont as our population ages and more individuals with disabilities choose to live in their own homes rather than in institutional settings. The Legislature recognized this, and the desirability of homes being welcoming to visitors with mobility impairments, when it passed what is currently the standard for houses built on speculation in 20 V.S.A. § 2907.

VCDR believes that the very basic standards in 20 V.S.A. § 2907 make access within a home considerably more achievable but that awareness of these standards has not been emphasized to the degree that would make people within the building trades and their customers aware of their importance. S.176 seeks to correct this by making a simple verification of adherence or non-adherence to these straightforward standards a part of the property sale. The proposal creates no penalty for non-compliance with the underlying standard but will at least alert the buyer as to whether or not the interior of the home has one level that will be adaptable to wheelchair access.

VCDR supports S.176 and believes that it will help builders to add to a housing stock that is better adapted to meeting the changing needs of our state's population.

Thank you for your consideration and please contact me at Ed@DisabilityRightsVT.org if you need further information.