

Senate Finance Committee Presentation on S.176-- 2/11/2016

John Pierce, Volunteer with the National Multiple Sclerosis Society

I) What it is

- Help for people with disabilities and the elderly to live safely at home: ramps, bathrooms, grab bars, railings
- “Help” in the form of tax credit (not tax deduction) for portion of the cost of home modifications
- Amount of credit based on cost of modifications, and income of home owner
- 17 states either have an operation program or are actively considering legislation (source: [MSS Issue Brief](#))

II) Why it's needed

- Promotes “age in place” and avoids institutionalization
- People on fixed incomes often can't afforded needed modifications
- VT's Aging population
 - VT second oldest state median age
 - Overall state population growth of 5.9% between 2010-2020; +55 population growth of 26% (source: [census data](#))
- Widely recognized lack of affordable, accessible housing
 - Housing stock is relatively old: in 2009 44% of housing built before 1950 (source: [2010 VHFA Housing Needs Assessment](#))
 - Age 18-64 non-disabled in poverty = 10.1%
 - Age 18-64 disabled in poverty = 28.4 % (source: [Annual Disability Statistics Compendium, UNH](#))

- VCIL Home Access Program: 60-80 projects/year, but **waiting list typically 60-100 or so with a waiting list of 2 years**
- Needs data from VCIL/NMSS Survey in January 2016
 - **198** people responded to survey
 - **87** people responded that they would use a tax credit to help pay for home modifications
 - **74%** - currently do not live in an accessible dwelling
 - **69%** - desire to improve the access of their current dwelling
 - **72%** - of respondents would require financial assistance to make home modification
- VCIL income eligibility criteria **only serves people up to 80%** of HUD Median income
- **Other programs** such as Home Ownership Centers, the federal ABLE program and Opportunities Credit Union do not fully meet need
- Long list of supporting partner organizations, including:
 - AARP, Triple As, VCIL, VCDR, VT Falls Prevention Coalition, VT Affordable Housing Coalition and **9** others
- Report of the **Council on Pathways from Poverty** recommends more funding for housing for elders and people with disabilities

III) Consequences of lack of modifications

- Deaths and injuries from falls: falls are the leading cause of accidental deaths for elders
- more people over age 65 die from falls than in auto accidents; in 2009 there were **118** deaths in VT related to falls
- VT falls death rate increased **439%** between 2000 and 2009
- In 2009, 1656 hospitalizations related to falls, costing **\$39,400,000**
(source: [Falls Free VT Coalition](#))
- **50%** of people with MS fall within a 3-6 month period: (source [NMSS Issue Brief](#))

IV) What it might “cost” in lost tax revenue

- VCIL Home Access Program average costs
 - \$8,000. for ramp
 - \$12,000. For bathroom
- # of modifications X cost of modifications
- Factored by income . . .
- Example of John Pierce
 - \$8,000 ramp
 - \$64,000 income
 - 40% of cost is eligible = **\$3,200** tax credit