

House Bill 8

My name is Glenn Reed and I reside in Wilder, Vermont. I'm writing to express my strong support for House Bill 8, which would create a personal income tax credit for home modifications that enhance safety and liveability.

I am currently employed in public housing but in past years have worked for independent living centers (ILC's) in the State of Vermont (Vermont Center for Independent Living, Rutland branch office) and in the State of California (Tri-County Independent Living in Eureka). ILC's provide programs, services and advocacy for people with disabilities.

While working at ILC's, helping to obtain funding for home modifications to improve accessibility for lower-income people was a passion of mine. I had a lot of success in this regard, and it helped lead to the construction of a great many exterior wheelchair ramps as well as the completion of bathroom modifications to improve accessibility. Very often, the recipients of such assistance contributed hundreds or thousands of dollars of their own money towards the needed changes. I was also aware that there are many more households with such needs who don't qualify for such assistance. They end up footing the bills entirely for thousands of dollars worth of needed changes to improve the accessibility of their homes and may delay the work as a result.

I have always felt it to be unfair that addressing a home's accessibility is viewed as a home improvement when assessing the home's value, including with property tax rates. If a home is rendered inaccessible due, for instance, to the reduced mobility of a person living there, then it is less safe and its value and livability is reduced for that person (as well as family members, care providers, etc.). Accessibility modifications return it to the previous condition of livability and safety that has been lost.

An income tax credit, as proposed in H. 8, would certainly help address this aspect of home modification to improve accessibility and safety. It recognizes that ramps and other accessibility modifications are not the same as adding on another room or two, finishing a basement to make it into a rentable apartment or renovating a kitchen to make it more aesthetically appealing.

I hope that the Committee will seriously consider this very practical bill which will help more people be able to make their own homes accessible and safe, while also helping to reduce the financial burden of doing so. Thank you.