

**DEPARTMENT OF SERVICES FOR PERSONS
WITH DISABILITIES**

CITY OF NEW HAVEN
Gretchen Knauff, Director



**Testimony Before the Legislation Committee
Board of Alders
City of New Haven, Connecticut**

By Gretchen Knauff, Director
Department of Services for
Persons with Disabilities

Good evening, Chair Cupo, Vice Chair Furlow, and Members of the Legislation Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on:

OR-2023-0047 PETITION TO AMEND THE NEW HAVEN ZONING ORDINANCE TEXT OF SECTION 22: ACCESSORY DWELLING UNITS INCLUDING REMOVING THE OWNER OCCUPANCY REQUIREMENT, ALLOWING DETACHED AND ATTACHED ADUS OUTSIDE OF THE EXISTING BUILDING ENVELOPE, ELIMINATING THE MINIMUM LOT SIZE REQUIREMENT AND AMENDING SETBACK REQUIREMENTS FOR ADUS.

The Department of Services for Persons with Disabilities respectfully requests that an additional provision be added to the proposed amendment that would require a minimum level of accessibility for certain Accessory Dwelling Units and therefore, increasing the number of available units for people with physical disabilities. Specifically, we request that Section D include:

Section D. 2. “All ADUs established at ground level by way of new construction or conversion must comply with the Type B accessibility requirements of the Connecticut State Building Code.”

I met with Laura Brown and Nate Hougrand at the City Plan Department and Robert Dillon, New Haven Building Inspector and they supported adding the Type B accessibility provision to the ordinance amendment.

The amount of affordable accessible housing in New Haven is inadequate to meet the current needs of people with disabilities and the problem will only get worse as the population ages. Currently, 26% of New Haven’s population has a disability and by 2030 1 in 5 Americans will be over the age of 65. According to an April 2021 report by the Urban Institute on Housing Accessibility and Affordability in New Haven County, more than a third of low or very low income, households include a family member with a disability. That number is expected to increase 23% by 2035. Requiring a Type B level of

accessibility in ADUs provides an opportunity to address the shortage of affordable, accessible housing for people with disabilities and adds little or no cost to the developer/builder of the Unit.

A Type B Unit is frequently called an adaptable unit. Adaptability is not as high a level of accessibility as “accessible” or “Type A” units. But adaptability would allow someone with a disability to get in and around the unit and be able to make modifications to improve access based on their individual accessibility needs. By limiting the additional Type B requirement to new or converted ground level units, it would not apply to ADUs above or below ground level. Some of basic features would include:

- **An accessible building entrance on an accessible route.** Accessible routes are 36” wide, made of slip resistant materials, and no stairs.
- **Doors and doorways that are useable by a person in a wheelchair.** Doors must be a minimum of 32” wide and have hardware that is usable by someone with a disability.
- **An accessible route into and through all elements and spaces in the dwelling unit.**
- **Operable parts** - Light switches, electrical outlets, thermostats, and other environmental controls that meet certain height and reach range requirements.
- **Reinforced walls in bathrooms for future installation of grab bars and shower seats.**
- **Usable kitchen and bathrooms** (usable by a person in a wheelchair). This includes requirements for certain floor space to allow a person who uses a wheelchair access the spaces.

As the City of New Haven is developing more and more housing options including innovative ideas like ADU's, and planning for its vision for 2034, let's include the needs of people with disabilities and older citizens in these plans. Again, I encourage you to add the following provision to the proposed ordinance amendment:

Section D. 2. “All ADUs established at ground level by way of new construction or conversion must comply with the Type B accessibility requirements of the Connecticut State Building Code.”

Again, thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak and please contact me if you have any questions or need further information.