



January 20, 2026

Chairman Joe Alexander
House Housing Committee
Subject: Testimony in Opposition to HB 1196

Dear Honorable Chair and members of the committee,

For the record my name is Krysten Evans, and I am the Director of Policy for ABLE NH, a statewide disability justice organization that works to protect and expand the civil and human rights of people with disabilities across New Hampshire. I am here today in strong opposition to House Bill 1196.

House Bill 1196 repeals the state's Housing Champion designation and grant program, a policy tool that has encouraged municipalities to adopt housing practices that respond to New Hampshire's most urgent housing needs. For people with disabilities, this program is not symbolic. It is one of the few mechanisms that has helped shift local policy toward inclusion, accessibility, and long term affordability.

New Hampshire is experiencing a severe housing shortage that disproportionately harms people with disabilities. According to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, households that include a person with a disability are significantly more likely to be cost burdened and to experience housing instability. Nationally, more than 40 percent of non-elderly adults with disabilities live in households that spend over 30 percent of their income on housing, compared to about 30 percent of those without disabilities. These pressures are even more acute in states like New Hampshire, where vacancy rates remain extremely low and rents continue to rise.

The Housing Champion program was designed to address exactly this kind of structural shortage by rewarding municipalities that take proactive steps to allow diverse housing types, including smaller units, multifamily housing, and developments that can be built at price points accessible to people on fixed or limited incomes. These are the same housing forms that work for many people with disabilities, including individuals who rely on SSI, SSDI, or Medicaid funded supports.

The repeal proposed in HB 1196 would eliminate both the designation and the grant funding tied to it. According to the New Hampshire Department of Business and Economic Affairs, approximately \$2.6 million in Housing Champion funds are already obligated to municipalities for housing related projects, with roughly \$3 million remaining. Eliminating this program does not erase New Hampshire's housing crisis. It removes one of the few incentives local governments have to be part of the solution.

People with disabilities are already pushed to the margins of the housing market. Many face discrimination, inaccessible units, zoning barriers that limit supportive or shared housing models, and long waiting lists for vouchers that cannot be used because there is nowhere to rent. New Hampshire Housing reports that extremely low income renters, including many people with disabilities, face a shortage of thousands of affordable and available units statewide. Removing tools that encourage municipalities to permit housing only deepens that gap.

This bill also undermines years of bipartisan work to acknowledge that housing policy is inseparable from health, employment, and community integration. Stable, accessible housing reduces reliance on emergency services, supports independent living, and allows people with disabilities to participate fully in civic and economic life. When municipalities are encouraged to plan for housing thoughtfully, everyone benefits, including seniors, veterans, and working families.

Disability justice demands that we look at policy through the lens of who is most harmed when systems fail. HB 1196 shifts responsibility away from the state at a moment when leadership is most needed. It sends a message that inclusion and accessibility are optional, rather than essential components of a functioning housing system.

I urge the committee to oppose House Bill 1196 and to preserve the Housing Champion program as one part of a broader, necessary response to New Hampshire's housing crisis. People with disabilities cannot afford for the state to step backward when the need has never been greater.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Krysten M. Evans". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Krysten M. Evans
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