

HOUSING ISSUES FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

#80

ADAPT's Comments for the Hearing on use of Public Funds for
Affordable Housing in the City of Austin

Late Backup

LOW INCOME AFFORDABLE HOUSING & RENTAL SUBSIDIES

Many people with disabilities have extremely limited incomes. A person who receives SSI income from Social Security is getting \$674 per month or \$8,088 per year. The waiting list for Section 8 is currently 4 to 5 years long and is closed -- so no one can get on it until it is opened up again. Public housing is also very limited compared to the need, and the waiting list is over a year. Personal attendants (who help people with disabilities and seniors with personal care and home health care) make about \$13,000 per year if they are lucky. Housing needs to be targeted to rents people can afford.

Section 8 and similar rental subsidies are critical for people to keep a roof over their heads. Communities should strategize ways to maximize rental subsidies for low income people with disabilities, as well as ways to target their housing funds for those most in need.

ADAPT believes funds should be concentrated on projects that provide housing units that serve people at or below 30% MFI. These projects should offer the people living in them a lease and key.

ENFORCEMENT

The federal Fair Housing Amendments Act, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the Americans with Disabilities Act all address requirements to make housing and related services accessible for people with disabilities. These laws are often times not followed; if there is no enforcement, compliance is unlikely to occur. Enforcement of these laws should be a priority. Existing and future housing projects should be surveyed to ensure compliance.

SEPARATING SERVICES AND HOUSING

While there is a need for increased housing and support services for people with disabilities, these two should be separated. We do not support housing which is tied to support services. An individual with a disability who is low income may need housing assistance and may also need attendant services, but in order to receive these services this person should not be required to live in a group home or nursing home. People with disabilities want to be part of the community and not indentured to their service providers or isolated in their residences. Housing and support services should be separated.

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BARRIER REMOVAL

There is an incredible need for assistance to people with disabilities who need access in their own homes. Inaccessible housing is substandard for people who need access. If you are a prisoner in your own home because you cannot get in or out independently due to lack of a ramp, railing, accessible fire alarm or other access accommodations, your housing is substandard. Support is needed to increase the number of architectural barrier removal programs. These programs must be consumer driven. Technical assistance needs to be provided to communities to help them develop these programs. Funds should be dedicated to support barrier removal programs, and technical assistance should be provided to communities to help them develop consumer driven programs.