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## **Comments for Affordable Housing Issues Forum 4/7/11 from ADAPT of Texas**

### **Affordability**

**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. The City of Austin should encourage new projects that serve any or all persons at or below 30% MFI -- not just supportive housing. One size does not fit all in affordable housing programs.**

### **Supportive Housing**

**ADAPT believes that while there is a need for increased housing and support services for people with disabilities, these two should be provided separately and distinctly. We do not support housing which is tied to support services. A low-income individual with a disability may need housing assistance and may also need attendant services or other support services, but he or she should be able to get them from different sources. Too often in housing plus services programs, in order to receive the housing services this person is required to use services they don't need but that are part of that housing. If you tick off your landlord your other supports are jeopardized, and vice versa if you tick off your service provider you suddenly lose your housing.**

**Last year the City Council committed to ADAPT that any services offered in locally funded supportive housing projects would be optional for anyone living there. The Council and the City should**

**live up to that commitment. People with disabilities want to be part of the community and not indentured to their service providers or isolated in their residences.**

## **Barrier Removal**

**There is a tremendous 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. This program must be consumer driven.**

**In addition, requiring Architectural Barrier Removal (ABR) funds to be used only on projects at or below 51% MFI is discriminatory; this current city requirement red-lines people who need access to certain housing projects. This is not required by HUD – as staff currently claims.**

## **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. The Austin Tenants Council runs the Tenant's Rights Assistance Program that helps with enforcement of access laws. Approximately 60% of tenants' rights complaints are disability related. ADAPT strongly supports funding of the Tenants' Rights Assistance Program.**