



IF MORE HOMES WERE BUILT LIKE THESE, ALL OF OUR FAMILY AND FRIENDS WOULD BE ABLE TO VISIT

S. 601: THE THANKSGIVING BILL
A STUDY COMMISSION ON BASIC HOME ACCESS
Making Housing in Massachusetts More Visitable
Lead Sponsor: Senator Patricia Jehlen

Over **10% of the population has difficulty walking** and/or using stairs.¹ However, the typical home contains physical barriers that pose problems for those with limited mobility. In fact, over the useful life of a single or two family home, there is a **90% probability** that someone with a disability will live or visit there.²

Our current housing supply makes it hard for families that include a person with limited mobility to find a home without paying for expensive improvements. Even after adapting a home to meet their needs, they will find that houses nearby typically contain barriers to entry, which severely limit a person's ability to engage and visit with friends and family. Things taken for granted, like attending Thanksgiving dinner at a relative's house or going to a friend's house, are nearly impossible for the mobility impaired.

Visitable homes allow seniors, returning veterans with disabilities, and others with limited mobility to **avoid isolation** and live an **engaged lifestyle** with the ability to **visit friends, family, and neighbors**.

What makes a home visitable?

- At least 1 zero-step entry
- 32" wide doorways
- A bathroom on the ground floor

Ensuring that more houses built in the future have these three simple design elements can make an astounding difference to someone that is mobility impaired. S. 601 creates a special commission to study home visitability standards and make recommendations about increasing the accessibility and inclusiveness of the Commonwealth's housing stock. It will be composed of stakeholders, including homebuilders, government officials, elected officials, architects, and advocates, and be charged with reviewing the relevant information, including best practices and the experiences in other states, before making policy recommendations.

Eight states and almost 50 local governments have already taken steps to avoid such barriers at little or no added cost by adopting a visitability policy that applies to new construction single family homes. Similar measures taken for new housing in the Commonwealth could yield **150,000 new homes that are visitable** over a 10-year period.³

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¹ Journal of the American Planning Association, Vol. 74, No 3, Summer 2008

² Id.

³ Historical Census of Housing Tables, U.S. Census Bureau, Housing and Household Economic Statistics Division, Last Revised: February 04, 2013