

Bill S. 601
The Thanksgiving Bill
188th (Current)

Resolve providing for an investigation and study by a special commission relative to the need for accessible homes for the elderly, returning veterans with disabilities, and families that include persons with disabilities

Submitted by members of the Staying Put Massachusetts community group by:

Paul Morse
Proponent of Bill S. 601

Good morning Senator Eldridge, Representative Honan, Senator Jehlen, and other members of the Joint Committee on Housing. My name is Paul Morse of 24 Beech St. Cambridge. I am speaking as a member of Staying Put Massachusetts, an independent, grassroots organization which creates small group and community wide conversations on topics relevant to “Aging in Place” and “Aging in Community”. I am also the owner of Morse Constructions, Inc., a design build firm renovating and adding on to homes in the greater Boston area for the last thirty seven years.

Members of Staying Put Massachusetts represent a small portion of the many citizens throughout the Commonwealth and the country who plan to remain in our homes and communities as we age. We strongly give our support Bill S.601.

Visitability means fewer restrictions and more independence for everyone. It is not only about people with walkers or in wheel chairs, but also about seniors who want to age in place, young parents using strollers, a woman who broke her leg skiing or a man with a hip replacement. In Boston, we are now struck by the sudden change for so many who came to a marathon and return to a home that is full of barriers as they face a new life. We must all be prepared physically and economically for a future in which any of us might temporarily or permanently require an environment free from unnecessary barriers to our everyday functioning. It is also about our need to provide the greatest possible opportunity for all individuals to fully participate and contribute to their communities.

STAYING PUT

As members of Staying Put Massachusetts, we identify with the growing “aging in community” movement to help communities support seniors in their homes while living actively longer.

It is clear many residents are uncertain they will be able to stay in their homes as they age. A study of Somerville seniors found that while 80% of respondents

over 55 like their neighborhoods and desire to stay, far fewer are confident in their ability to pay for needed adaptations.

As a builder, I am confident that, given the opportunity, the commission would discover the minimal challenges and great rewards made possible by incorporating these design requirements into our building practices. The most fundamental benefits of Inclusive Design would be included without invoking the complications of the Mass. Architectural Access Board, the Americans with Disabilities Act or other federal regulations.

Significant economic and social gains will accrue from incorporating basic home access at construction, and minimize the displacement of older residents out of familiar territory and into a new environment where they face a new social existence.

S. 601 is forward looking and will help normalize a new understanding of the importance of the Visitable Home. We are confident that the Commission will discover the multiple economic and social benefits.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on S. 601.

For more information

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