

ACTION ALERT – HOUSE BILL 332

On Wednesday, January 18th, 2012, the [House Ways and Means Committee](#) will hold SPONSOR Testimony on [House Bill 332](#) (Visitability Tax Credit). The Ohio Developmental Disabilities Council, along with several [other organizations](#), is supportive of efforts to improve accessible homes in Ohio. Listed below are talking points for advocates, families and professionals to use in support of House Bill 332 and increasing homes with Visitability.

If this is an issue that is important to you, I encourage you to contact your [state representative](#) and express your viewpoints on this bill. We also welcome any feedback or comments from advocates who have taken action on this legislation. Make sure you send a note to [DD Council](#) indicating whether you called or wrote your legislator on this issue. It is very helpful for Council and other organizations to know how much support from grassroots advocates this issue has received from across the state. I also encourage you to share this message with your friends and colleagues.

Talking Points:

House Bill 332

Advocates are encouraged to call and talk with their State Representative about a bill that was recently introduced that would provide an income tax credit for building or modifying homes with Visitability features. House Bill 332 was introduced by State Representatives Mike Stinziano and Cheryl Grossman and has been co-sponsored by State Representatives: Kenny Yuko, Mark Okey, Nancy Garland and Nickie Antonio. If one of these people is already your legislator, please call and thank them for supporting Visitability. If your legislator is not listed, you can call them to encourage their support. The talking points below can be used as a guide:

Hello, my name is _____, and I live at _____, which is in Rep. _____'s district. I am calling today to ask (him/her) to support House Bill 332.

House Bill 332 would create a non-refundable tax credit for new-home buyers who build their homes with Visitability features and for existing homeowners who install Visitability features in their current homes.

Visitability is a term used to describe homes that include three basic features:

A zero-step entrance on an unobstructed path from the street or driveway

Wider interior doorways on the main floor

And an accessible bathroom on the main floor

With Ohio's aging population and more individuals with disabilities seeking to live independent lives in the community, House Bill 332 is a step in the right direction to ensure that accessible housing is available in future years.

Would you let Rep. _____ know I called and ask (him/her) what their position on this bill is? I would respectfully request the Representatives support for House Bill 332.

Thank you!

SAMPLE Letter/E-mail:

{Date}

The Honorable {Legislator}

{Address}

Columbus, OH 43215

Dear {Title}{Legislator},

I am writing to ask for your support of House Bill 332, legislation that has recently been introduced to create a non-refundable tax credit for the inclusion of Visitability features in new home construction and for existing home modifications. The bill was introduced on September 21, 2011 and has been referred to the House Ways and Means Committee.

According to the AARP Public Policy Institute, “Visitability is a movement that seeks to increase the supply of accessible housing through the inclusion of three basic structural features at the time of home construction; a zero-step entrance, wide doorways, and at least a half bath on the main floor of the home.” These features, while not providing full accessibility, make it possible for a mobility impaired person to visit the homeowner, and also make the house more useable when the resident experiences a temporary mobility problem.

House Bill 332 would provide up to a \$2,500 income tax credit for new homes that include universal Visitability features and up to a \$1,000 income tax credit for ½ the costs incurred to modify an existing home with Visitability features. This tax credit would be non-refundable and the state would cap annual credits at \$300,000.

House Bill 332 is good public policy for a number of reasons. The first is that Ohio, like many other states in the nation, is facing a growing aging population. According to the Scripps Gerontology Center, Medicaid costs for long-term care could consume half of the state’s budget by 2020. Already, Ohio is pursuing options to expand in-home care, but not taking steps to eliminate structural barriers that could eliminate this option for seniors who have or will experience a mobility impairment while living in their home.

Having a Visitability incentive in Ohio will not solve Ohio’s accessible home problem overnight, but is a step in the right direction. Right now, Ohio spends more than \$5 million in taxpayer money to retrofit homes for individuals with disabilities EACH YEAR. Retrofitting a home for accessible features is much

more expensive and generally less aesthetically pleasing than incorporating accessible features during the design and construction of a new home. New building techniques enable houses to be built without ramps and still have a zero-step entrance.

According to the Journal of American Planning Association, there is a 91 percent probability that a home that was built in 2000 will have at least one disabled resident or visitor during the useful life of the home. That means that almost every new home built today will not be able to accommodate an aging relative, friend, neighbor or even immediate family member who has or may incur a permanent or temporary mobility impairment without costly home modifications.

I also hope you will consider changes to House Bill 332 that would likely increase the number of new homes constructed with Visitability features. As currently drafted, the bill provides a tax credit for the cost of new home construction that includes accessible features. Because the credit for new home construction isn't tied to the actual cost of the accessible features, but rather the total cost of the home, the credit sought by a contractor or homebuyer can always be \$2,500. Evidence suggests that incorporating Visitability features during the design and construction phase generally costs around \$1,200. By tying the tax credit for new home construction to the cost of Visitability features, the tax credit program could potentially double the number of new homes constructed with accessibility features each year. During these difficult economic times, this would seem to provide the best value for this important policy approach.

I respectfully request a response from you that indicates what your position is on this bill. Will you join me in supporting hearings on House Bill 332 that allow advocates and constituents like myself to testify on this important public policy issue?

Sincerely,
(Constituent)
(Constituent Address)