



February 25, 2025

Joint Legislative Public Hearing on 2026 Executive Budget Proposal: Housing

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony regarding the upcoming NYS budget. My name is Andrea Champlin. I am the Statewide Systems Advocate at the Finger Lakes Independence Center (FLIC) in Ithaca, NY. FLIC is part of a network of Independent Living Centers across the nation that provide advocacy and support to people with disabilities to help them live independently in the community. One key component of this includes helping people with disabilities to obtain safe, accessible, and affordable housing. Providing adequate funding for programs such as Access to Home is vital to accomplishing this task. Funding Access to Home is also critical to the success of the Master Plan on Aging and Olmstead Plan.

Access to Home is a program overseen by NYS Homes and Community Renewal (HCR). The program provides funding for New Yorkers with moderate-to-low incomes that are aging or have disabilities to complete home modifications needed to ensure safety and accessibility. Some examples of modifications that this program funds include installing ramps to ensure people that use wheelchairs can get in and out of their homes, or bathroom grab bars that help people complete activities of daily living safely. Modifications like this can enable people with disabilities and aging New Yorkers to stay in the community and avoid more costly institutions, such as nursing homes. There are more older adults in our state than ever before, and this trend will likely continue (Center for an Urban Future, 2023). Nearly half of people aged 75 or older also have a disability (DeAngelis, 2023). It is essential that New York address the challenges that older adults and people with disabilities face by investing in programs such as Access to Home. In addition to immediately helping households who request the modifications, Access to Home also helps to increase the overall supply of accessible housing. If households that initially obtained the modifications leave their home, program guidelines ensure that the modifications remain intact and that people with disabilities are prioritized to then fill those units.

Last year, legislators fought for and obtained \$5 million for Access to Home, an increase from the Governor's proposed \$1 million allocation. It is my sincere hope that legislators will, once again, fight for this program, not only to re-instate the previously gained funding, but to increase funding for the program for a total of \$10 million. This increase will ensure that Access to Home is available to anyone eligible to receive it.

Thank you for your time,

Andrea Champlin
Statewide Systems Advocate
Finger Lakes Independence Center



Finger Lakes **Independence** Center

Opening Doors to Independence

References

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DeAngelis, T. (2023, November 1). *Nearly half of the oldest Americans have disabilities*. Monitor on psychology. <https://www.apa.org/monitor/2023/11/older-adults-disabilities>