

February 25, 2026

**Testimony to the Joint Legislative Housing Budget Hearing
on the 2026-27 Executive Budget Proposal**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. My name is Lindsay Miller, submitting on behalf of the New York Association on Independent Living (NYAIL). We are calling on the Legislature to restore and expand funding for the Access to Home Program, a vital resource that provides funding for home modifications and ensures people with disabilities and older adults can remain in their homes and communities. **Restore the \$4 million cut to Access to Home funding and add an additional \$5 million to achieve \$10 million in total funding.**

Access to Home is administered by the Department of Homes and Community Renewal (DHCR) which provides critical financial assistance to low- and moderate-income New Yorkers with disabilities to modify their homes for accessibility. Through grants to local organizations, the program supports cost-effective improvements such as ramps, lifts, and bathroom and kitchen modifications. These modifications not only enhance autonomy and dignity for people with disabilities but also save the State millions of dollars each year by preventing costly stays in nursing homes and other congregate settings.

Last year's funding of \$5 million was an important acknowledgment of the growing need. However, this funding level remains far too low to meet demand, particularly as New York's aging population continues to rise and accessible housing stock remains severely limited.

As the State advances various housing initiatives within this budget, it is critical that disabled New Yorkers are not overlooked. Robust Access to Home funding expands housing options and is essential to meeting the goals of the forthcoming Olmstead Plan. If New York is committed to upholding the promise of the Americans with Disabilities Act and the right to full community integration, investments must be made.

Access to Home is a successful program that helps New Yorkers like Kate and Tom. Both are elderly and experience a variety of disabilities that made navigating their bathroom difficult and dangerous. In fact, the couple had been opting to use a commode instead of their low, non-accessible toilet, which only added more challenges to their safety and comfort. The shower was also inaccessible due to the difficulty of stepping in/out of it, especially when wet and slippery. Kate and Tom received assistance with

completing their application from an Independent Living Center and were awarded the Access to Home grant. The grant funded the purchase and installation of a new, taller, ADA compliant toilet, a walk-in shower with a lower lip, flooring replacement, and grab bars that allowed them to use their bathroom easily and safely.



Kate and Tom's inaccessible bathroom



Improvements made by the Access to Home RESTORE grant

Increasing total Access to Home funding to \$10 million is a cost-effective proposal that will help ensure statewide access to modification supports, reduce institutionalization, and affirm the right of people with disabilities to live safely and independently in their communities.

Lindsay Miller
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