



**Our mission is to empower individuals with disabilities throughout the Eastern Iowa Corridor through education, advocacy, and peer support, so that they may achieve greater independence and integrated community participation.**

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The Honorable Sandra Thompson  
Federal Housing Finance Agency Washington, D.C.

Director Thompson,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the Federal Housing Finance Agency (FHFA) Request for Information on tenant protections. My name is Jasmine Megowan and I am the Executive Director of Access 2 Independence.

Access 2 Independence (Access) has been serving the Eastern Iowa Corridor for over 40 years. Officially established as a Center for Independent Living (CIL) in 1998, Access has provided over 13,000 non-residential independent living services to individuals with disabilities. These services include advocacy, peer support, independent living skills training, youth transition, employment support, and transition from institutions into community-based settings.

People with disabilities struggle to find homes that are both affordable and accessible. Despite the tremendous need, less than five percent of housing nationwide is accessible for people with moderate mobility difficulties, and less than one percent is accessible for wheelchair users.

Inaccessible housing is a significant barrier to community living as observed with Access' consumers who experience barriers within their homes that have restricted their community participation, presented safety concerns, and limited their ability to live full independent lives. In the 2021-2022 program year alone, nearly 20% of all services provided by Access were related to securing accessible housing or other adaptive housing service (e.g., modifications, assistive technology, etc.).

In addition, many people with disabilities are experiencing an affordability crisis. In 2021-22, 94% of Access' consumers grossed less than \$20,000/year. With the average rent for a 1-bedroom apartment in Cedar Rapids and Iowa City (two of the major cities in our service area) ranging from \$892-\$950/month, many of these consumers have been priced out of the housing market.

Without affordable, accessible housing in the community, many individuals with disabilities are at risk of institutionalization or homelessness. Institutions create an isolated, unnatural way of life that is inappropriate and unnecessary, while consuming a disproportionate share of limited public resources. Currently, Access is supporting 4 consumers who have been needlessly living in institutional settings for the past 2 years, just waiting to find housing that supports their physical needs and is within their financial means.

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Safe, stable, affordable housing was first recognized as a human right in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Housing is critical to many facets of life, including physical and mental health, access to education, and economic outcomes among many others. Ensuring greater housing stability means that the lowest-income and most marginalized renters have an accessible and affordable place to call home.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jasmine".

Jasmine Megowan, Executive Director

Access 2 Independence

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