

U.S. SENATOR BOB CASEY



CHAIRMAN Special Committee on Aging

Why do we need the Visitable Inclusive Tax Credits for Accessible Living (VITAL) Act?

By 2060, one in every four Americans will be over age 65. Currently, two in five adults over 65 have a disability. As people age, they need structurally and mechanically safe housing that is accessible to many types of disabilities. However, as of 2011, less than 6 percent of our national housing supply was accessibly designed. Accessible homes offer specific features and technologies, such as lowered kitchen counters and sinks, widened doorways, grab bars, and no-step showers.

A lack of affordable and accessible housing can force people with disabilities and older adults to live in institutional settings when they could be living in their own homes or in their community in a home with accessible features. More than 89 percent of adults ages 65 and over hope to stay in their homes as they age and remain independent and active in their communities.

The housing affordability crisis is affecting many older adults and people with disabilities. Approximately 4.8 million people with disabilities—living in a community, not in an institution—who depend on federal monthly Supplemental Security Income benefits have incomes averaging about \$914 a month, low enough to be priced out of every rental housing market in the Nation. The Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) program is a federal program providing tax credits to developers who build new housing for low-income renters. The LIHTC program can be used to increase the number of accessible homes and address the affordability of those homes so that more people with disabilities and older adults can live in the communities they choose.

What would the VITAL Act do?

- Increase the overall funding for LIHTC for both 4 and 9 percent credits.
- Increase the funding available to developers who build units that are:
 - designed for people with disabilities and
 - located in places that are walkable and rollable, with access to transit, so that people are connected to their communities and not isolated.
- Require that at least 40 percent of the units constructed under LIHTC are adaptable/accessible for people with disabilities. States may lower this amount to 20% if the units are also located in walkable/rollable areas.
- Allocate each state housing finance authority with \$150,000 annually, to establish LIHTC resource centers to support new and nonprofit developers.
- Create a cross-divisional housing national advisory council to provide general recommendations on national LIHTC trends and best practices.