

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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JOINT COMMITTEE ON HOUSING ADVANCES ACCESSIBLE HOUSING BILL

Legislation Critical to Quality of Life and Independence of the Disabled

BOSTON-- The Joint Committee on Housing took favorable action on legislation filed by Senator Pat Jehlen (D-Somerville) that would study and promote increased accessibility and inclusiveness of the Commonwealth's housing stock.

S 601, *A Resolve Providing for an Investigation and Study by a Special Commission Relative to the Need for Accessible Homes for the Elderly, Returning Veterans with Disabilities, and Families that Include Persons with Disabilities* (The Thanksgiving Bill) was released from the committee today with a favorable report following an executive session. The legislation authorizes a study by a special commission on the need to expand accessible homes for the elderly, returning veterans and other individuals with disabilities and families that include persons with disabilities.

"I applaud Senator Jehlen for her leadership on this issue and effort to further the discussion on how to expand opportunities for people with mobility limitations," said Senate Chair of the Joint Committee on Housing Senator Jamie Eldridge (D-Acton). "I am proud to support the establishment of a commission that will study how we can reduce barriers for people with limited mobility in order to find and access homes."

"This is an important issue because it will allow people with disabilities to live independently within their communities without having to worry about mobility restrictions when visiting friends and family," said House Chair of the Joint Committee on Housing Representative Kevin Honan (D-Brighton). "The

commission established through this bill will identify strategies and best practices for implementing the building standards necessary to accomplish these goals.”

“Opportunities that many take for granted, like visiting with friends or eating Thanksgiving dinner at a relative’s house, can be difficult if not impossible for those with impaired mobility,” said Senator Pat Jehlen. “Minor design changes for new housing construction, such as including one zero-step entry and 32 inch doorways, would make it easier for everyone, since we all hope to age in place and want to continue to visit and be visited.”

The Thanksgiving Bill was introduced to address the physical barriers that keep individuals with disabilities from visiting and spending holiday occasions with family and friends. The Commission would consider reasonable approaches to adopting a visitability building standard, which would include a zero-step entry, a 32” wide doorway into the home at the no step entry and the availability of a bathroom on the entry floor.