

HOUSING POSITION PAPER

Particularly in this challenging state economy, homelessness and the need for affordable housing present complex public policy issues. Securing affordable housing is a fundamental and sometimes life threatening problem for thousands of Michigan families, and has proven particularly difficult for people with disabilities.

The resources available to promote affordable housing are all too scarce. Leveraging and allocating these resources to achieve the greatest social benefit requires not only technical expertise, but sound public policy decisions at all levels.

We applaud the administration's policy direction to make housing for people with disabilities a high priority. While there is room for a variety of strategies to achieve this objective in each community, we suggest that there are fundamental principles that must be applied universally.

Inclusive Communities

Simply creating new affordable housing units is not enough. For too long, people with disabilities have been segregated in institutions, in only the poorest neighborhoods, and in housing projects that congregate them with other disenfranchised groups. If people with disabilities are to become valued members of every community, we must pursue community development strategies that enable them to live and interact with others who do not experience disability, poverty, or other "special" conditions or circumstances. We must assure that implementation of public policy does not inadvertently lead to further concentration of poverty.

Separation of Housing from Supports

People with disabilities should not be required to reside in a particular location in order to gain access to either affordable housing or to needed supports, and should be able to select a service provider (or none at all) to support them in a home of their choosing.

Self Determination

People with disabilities must be supported in having a full array of choices about the neighborhood in which they live and the supports that they receive. To the greatest extent possible, available funding for housing and community supports should follow the person. Housing subsidies must therefore be more available, and portable.

The segregation of persons with disabilities or the collocation of persons perceived as deviant, the poor, the elderly and persons with disabilities, are unacceptable practices. Michigan's policies should speak to this issue and assure that our State is not a party to nor complicit in endeavors which cause this result.

Michigan's success in closing state institutions brings with it an imperative to assure that people with disabilities are woven into the fabric of every community. Affordable, integrated housing based upon these key principles is an essential first step in achieving this objective.

Adopted June 14th by The Arc Michigan board of directors, as The Arc Michigan's position on housing for persons with developmental disabilities.

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