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OFFICE OF THE  
COUNTY COUNCIL

MEMO TO: WAI-12 File

F R O M: Alice L. Lee, Chair   
Water and Infrastructure Committee

SUBJECT: **TRANSMITTAL OF LEGISLATIVE PROPOSAL RELATING TO  
VISITABILITY STANDARDS IN THE COUNTY'S BUILDING CODE**  
(WAI-12)

The attached legislative proposal pertains to Item 12 on the Committee's agenda.

wai:ltr:012atrans01

Attachment

# Resolution

No. \_\_\_\_\_

## URGING THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS TO EVALUATE THE INCORPORATION OF VISITABILITY STANDARDS FOR NEW RESIDENTIAL CONSTRUCTION IN THE COUNTY'S BUILDING CODE

WHEREAS, a November 2016 study titled "State of Hawaii Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice with a Focus on People with Disabilities" ("Analysis") was prepared by the Center on Disability Studies at University of Hawaii at Manoa for eight agencies throughout the State, including the County's Department of Housing and Human Concerns; and

WHEREAS, using data from the U.S. Census Bureau, 2010–2014 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, the Analysis stated the County of Maui is home to approximately 16,700 people with disabilities, comprising 10.6 percent of the County's total population; and

WHEREAS, among the people in the County over 64 years old, an estimated 7,500 people, or 34 percent, have a disability; and

WHEREAS, the State of Hawaii Department of Business, Economic Development & Tourism ("DBEDT") published data in 2018 showing the State's population over the age of 64 years is projected to grow from 244,000 in 2016 to 393,000 in 2045, significantly outpacing the State's overall population growth; and

WHEREAS, population growth among older adults poses significant challenges to the State's and Maui County's economic, physical, and social structures; and

WHEREAS, the Analysis presented 2015 DBEDT data showing Maui County's population was estimated to grow by 25 percent from 2015 to 2025, resulting in a projected 13,949 new housing units required by 2025; and

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WHEREAS, the term “visitability” refers to the design of housing that can be lived in or visited by people with mobility limitations, who have trouble with steps, or who use wheelchairs or walkers; and

WHEREAS, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development endorsed the visitability concept in its 1996 “Fair Housing Planning Guide, Volume 1;” and

WHEREAS, the Analysis recommended six visitability standards:

1. At least one zero-step entrance;
2. Interior doors, including bathrooms, with 32 inches or more of clear passage space;
3. At least a half bath (preferably a full bath) on the main floor;
4. Reinforcement in bathroom walls for future grab bar installation (important to support aging-in-place);
5. Space to maneuver a wheelchair in food preparation facilities if provided on the floor served by the zero-step entrance; and
6. Light switches and electrical outlets within comfortable reach for all; and

WHEREAS, the Analysis further stated “a growing number of architects and builders are coming to realize that including visitability features increases construction costs only minimally or not at all, and is a selling point appreciated by many home buyers of all ages”; and

WHEREAS, requiring visitability features for new residential construction would not require costly retrofitting to existing homes and would support accessibility; and

WHEREAS, the Analysis highly recommended that local governments make visitability a requirement of building codes; and

WHEREAS, the inclusion of visitability standards for new residential construction in the County’s Building Code will improve the quality of life for persons with mobility limitations by designing homes

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with features that enhance accessibility and inclusiveness, thereby allowing them to perform daily activities with a measure of ease and independence; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED by the Council of the County of Maui:

1. That it urges the Department of Public Works to evaluate the six visitability standards set forth in the Analysis, with a view toward incorporating those or similar standards for new residential construction in a proposed bill to amend the County's Building Code; and
2. That certified copies be transmitted to the Honorable Michael P. Victorino, Mayor, County of Maui, and Rowena Dagdag-Andaya, Director of Public Works, County of Maui.