



Make today a breakthrough.

August 21, 2024

The Honorable Elizabeth Warren
United States Senate
309 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington DC 20510

The Honorable Emanuel Cleaver
U.S. House of Representatives
2217 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Raphael Warnock
United States Senate
416 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington DC 20510

Dear Senators Warren and Warnock and Representative Cleaver,

As the leading national organization that represents individuals with spinal muscular atrophy (SMA), a neuromuscular disease that impacts physical strength, **Cure SMA is pleased to support the introduction of the American Housing and Economic Mobility Act.** Your legislation addresses a critical need for individuals with SMA and other physical disabilities by increasing the availability of accessible housing units.

SMA is a degenerative disease that progressively weakens the muscles needed for essential daily activities like breathing, eating, crawling, and walking. Many individuals with SMA rely on power wheelchairs and require homes that are designed to meet their accessibility needs. Unfortunately, accessible housing is both limited and often unaffordable. Currently, there is no housing market in the United States where a person living solely on disability benefits (Supplemental Security Income) can afford a safe and accessible apartment without additional rental assistance. The monthly SSI payment is currently \$943 per month, which is less than the average rent for a basic one-bedroom apartment.

The situation is further exacerbated by the severe shortage of accessible housing. Many individuals with SMA and other disabilities are stuck on long waitlists or forced to live in unsafe or unsuitable conditions. As one parent of a child with SMA shared, *“When we rented, we had to forgo our daughter using her power wheelchair indoors.”* For adults with SMA, the search for accessible housing can be similarly daunting: *“It took me a few years to find affordable, accessible housing where I could finally wheel my wheelchair into the bathroom.”*

The American Housing and Economic Mobility Act offers a meaningful solution to the housing challenge faced by individuals with SMA and other disabilities by funding new housing and requiring them to double the federal minimum requirement for accessible units. If enacted, this change will make it easier for individuals with SMA and other disabilities to find homes that meet their needs. An adult with SMA shared “Living in accessible, affordable housing has allowed me to



live within easy access to public transportation, my personal care assistant pool and my job.”

Thank you again for your support of individuals with SMA and the disability community. For more information, please contact Sarah Bellish, Cure SMA Advocacy Manager, at sarahbellish@curesma.org or 202-871-8005.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Maynard Friesz".

Maynard Friesz
Vice President of Policy & Advocacy
Cure SMA

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sarah Bellish".

Sarah Bellish
Manager, Policy & Advocacy
Cure SMA