



DISABILITY AWARENESS &

HOUSING ACCESSIBILITY

ADVOCACY



**NATIONAL LOW INCOME
HOUSING COALITION**

Melissa DiVietri



- Michigan Native
- 7 Siblings
- Italian-Catholic
- Author, Artist & Speaker
- Uniquely Abled Advocate
- Dog-mom to Oreo!!



Mobility Devices



manual
wheelchair



forearm crutches



exoskeleton suit



walker with seat



special tank



three wheel
scooter

“More than 1 in 4 adults in the United States – over 70 million people – live with a disability.”

CDC

Accessible housing often has long waitlists and higher demand than supply.

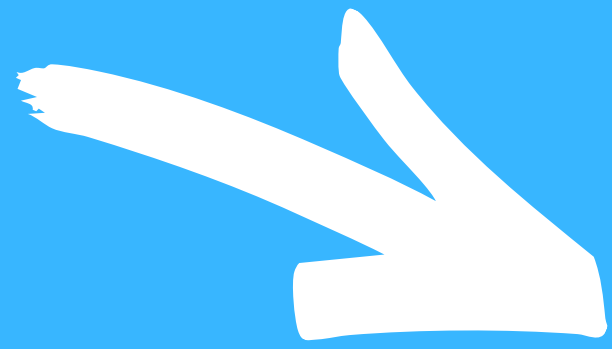


Fair Housing Act (1968, amended 1988)

The Fair Housing Act makes it **illegal** for landlords or housing providers to **discriminate** against tenants **because of a disability**. It requires landlords to allow *reasonable accommodations* and *modifications* so **disabled tenants can live safely and independently.**

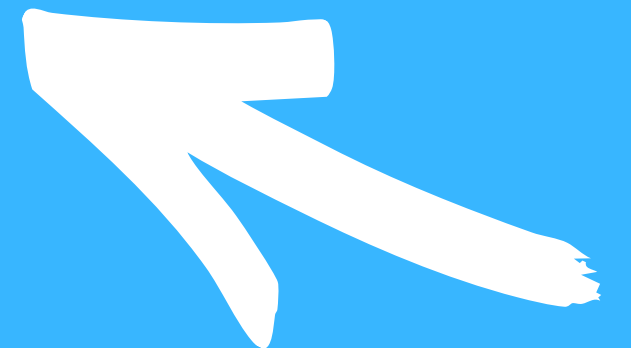
Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (1973)

Section 504 prohibits disability discrimination in any housing program receiving federal financial assistance and requires housing providers to provide reasonable accommodations.



What We Will Cover:

- **empathizing with housing accessibility**
- **documenting accessibility barriers**
- **requesting reasonable accommodations**
- **the policy landscape + solutions**



**Accessibility is
not simple.**

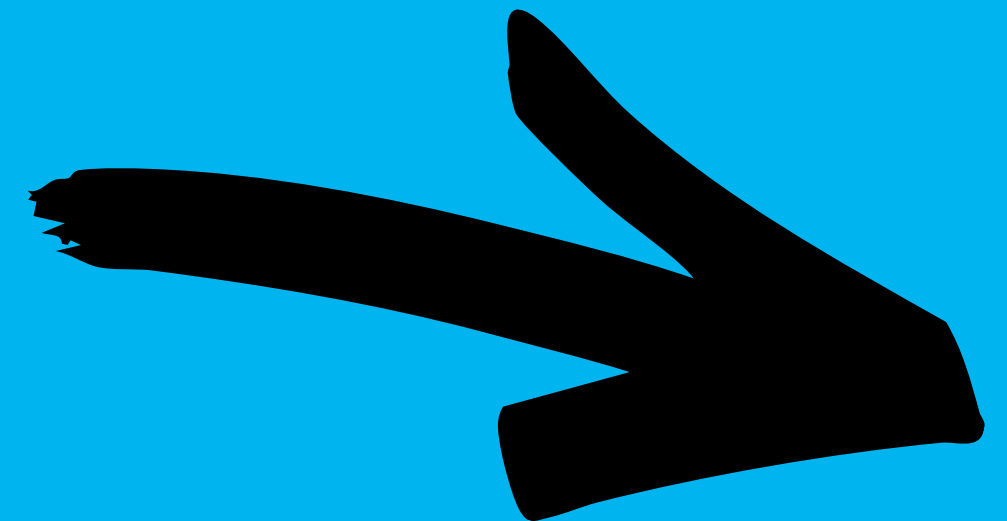
**For me, it's not.
It takes effort
every single time.**





**Name examples
of access barriers?**

Comment in the chat

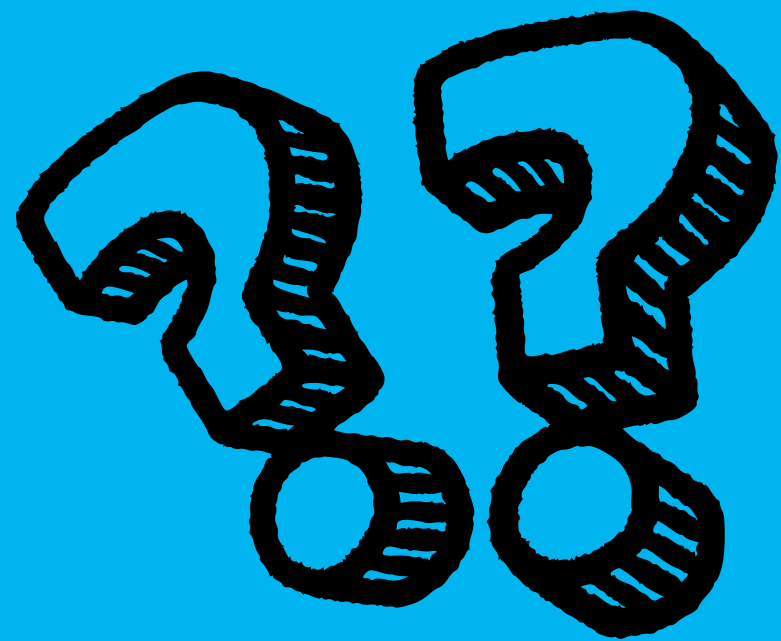


Systemic Issue

- Lack of accessible housing inventory
- Long waitlists for ADA-compliant units
- High cost of accessible modifications
- Limited enforcement of accessibility laws

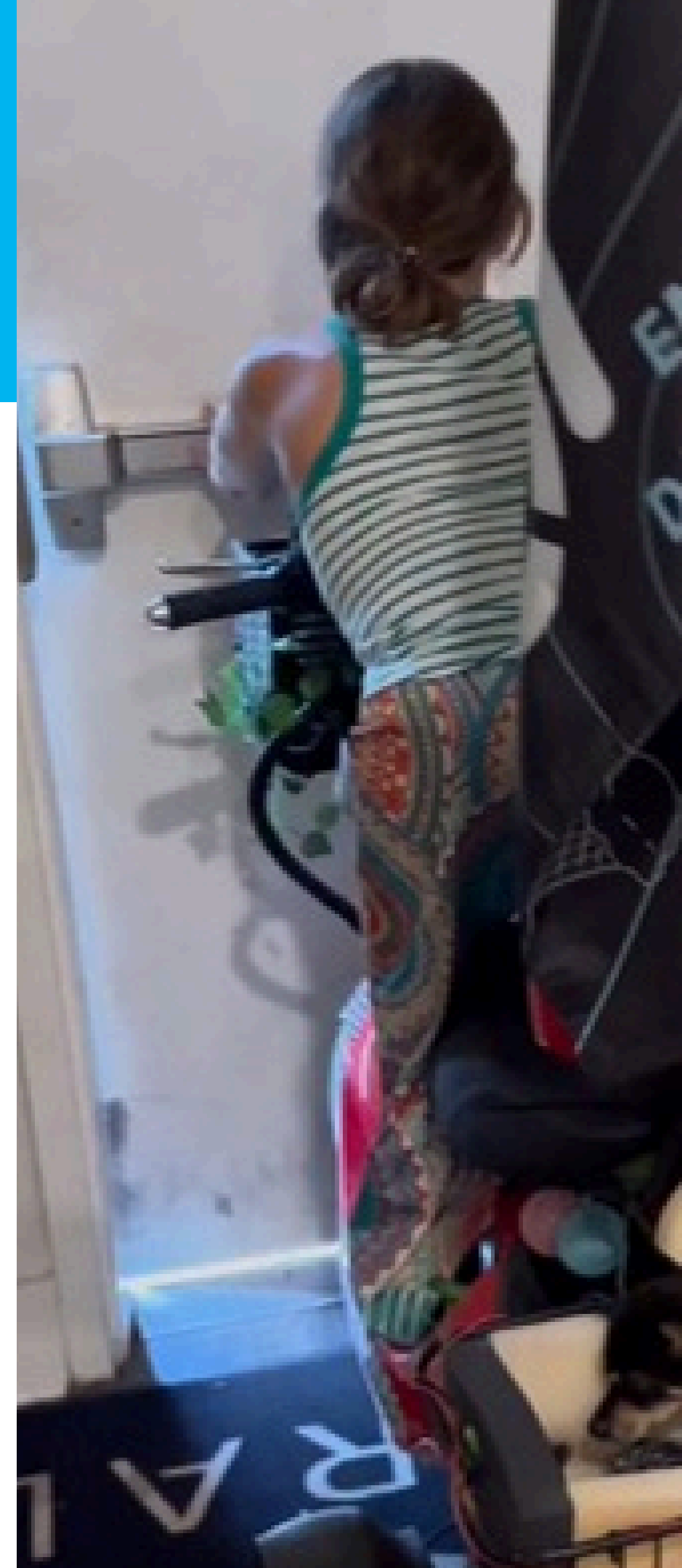


Lived-Experiences



Physical Building Barriers

- Heavy entry doors that exceed ADA
- Lack of automatic door openers
- Improper ramps or no ramps
- Broken accessibility equipment (doors, buttons, elevators)













1701 Central Apart...

Wed, Feb 28, 2024, 5:47 PM



to me, 1701

Hello Melissa

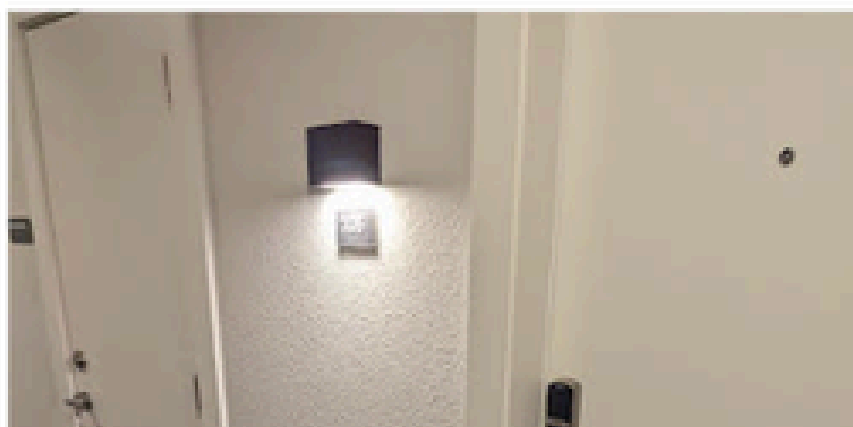
Hope all is well. You will not be able to continue to park your scooter in the hallway, it is against building code. Hallways need to be clear in the event of a fire. You may park your scooter next to the handicapped parking spaces, I have attached photos for reference

GSC

3 Attachments • Scanned by Gmail



Add all to Drive



Under the Fair Housing Act, housing providers are required to make reasonable accommodations for individuals with disabilities when such accommodations are necessary to afford **equal opportunity to use and enjoy a dwelling.**

Check-List

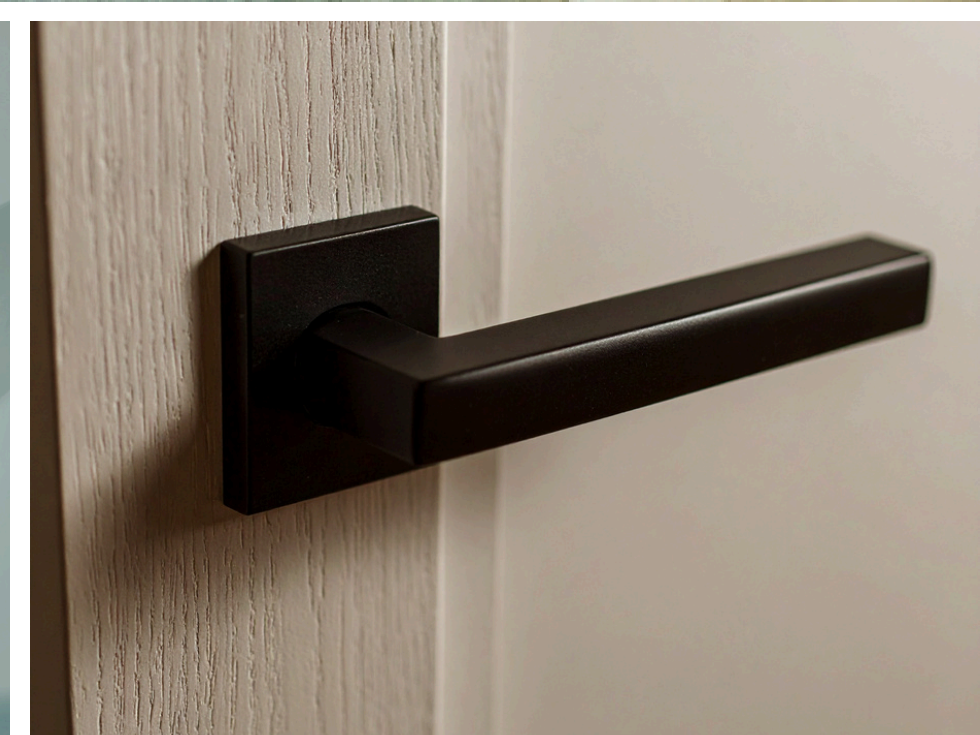
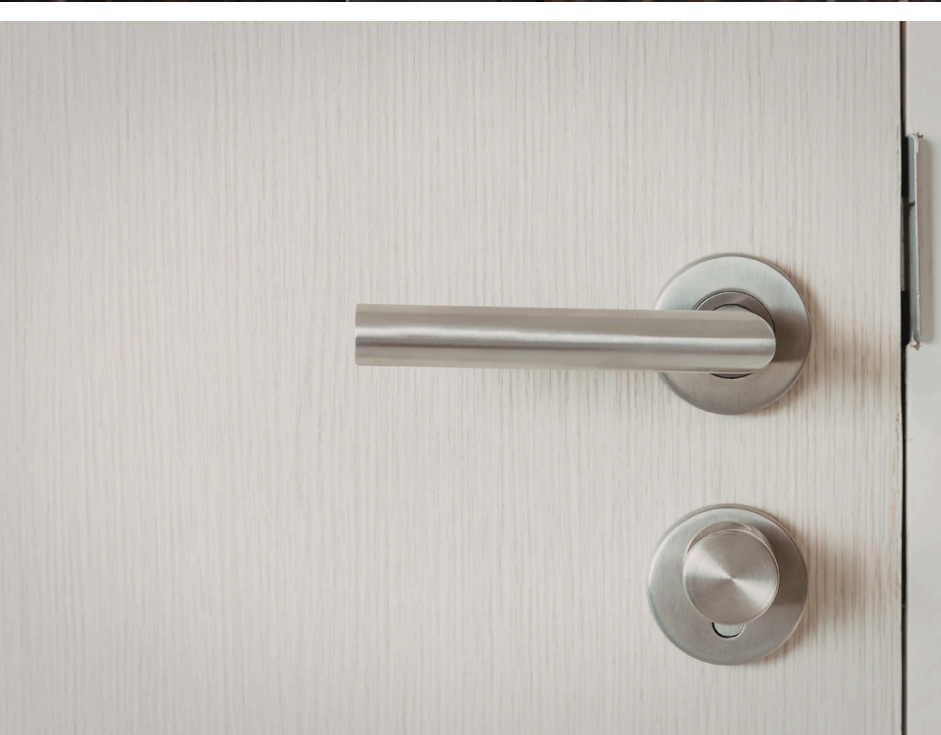
- **Is there a clear path to exit at all times?**
- **Does the scooter block any doorway or exit route?**
- **Can two people pass without squeezing?**

Loading Vehicles





Paint Wear

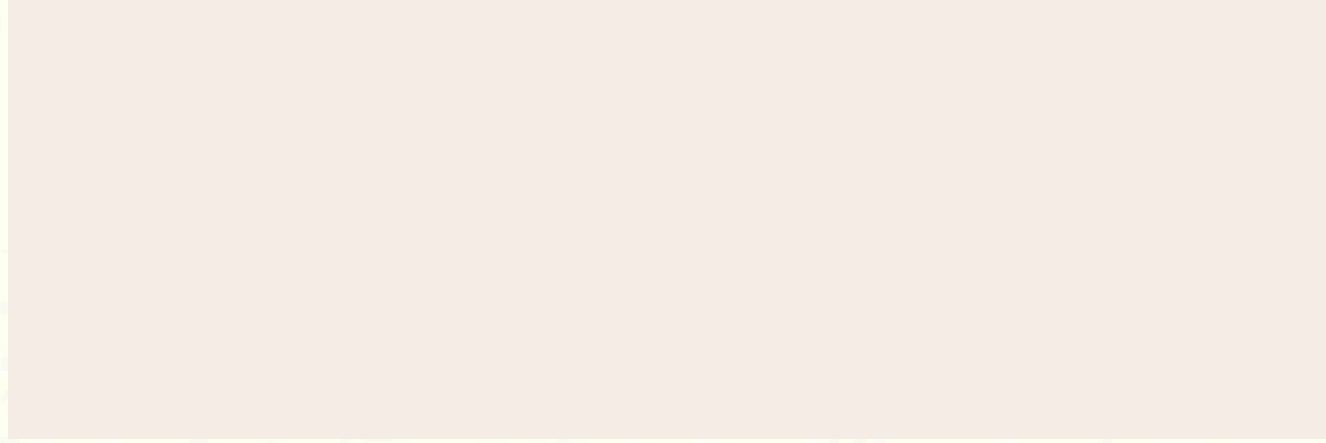




Double Parking



Re:



Dear Mr. Trice:

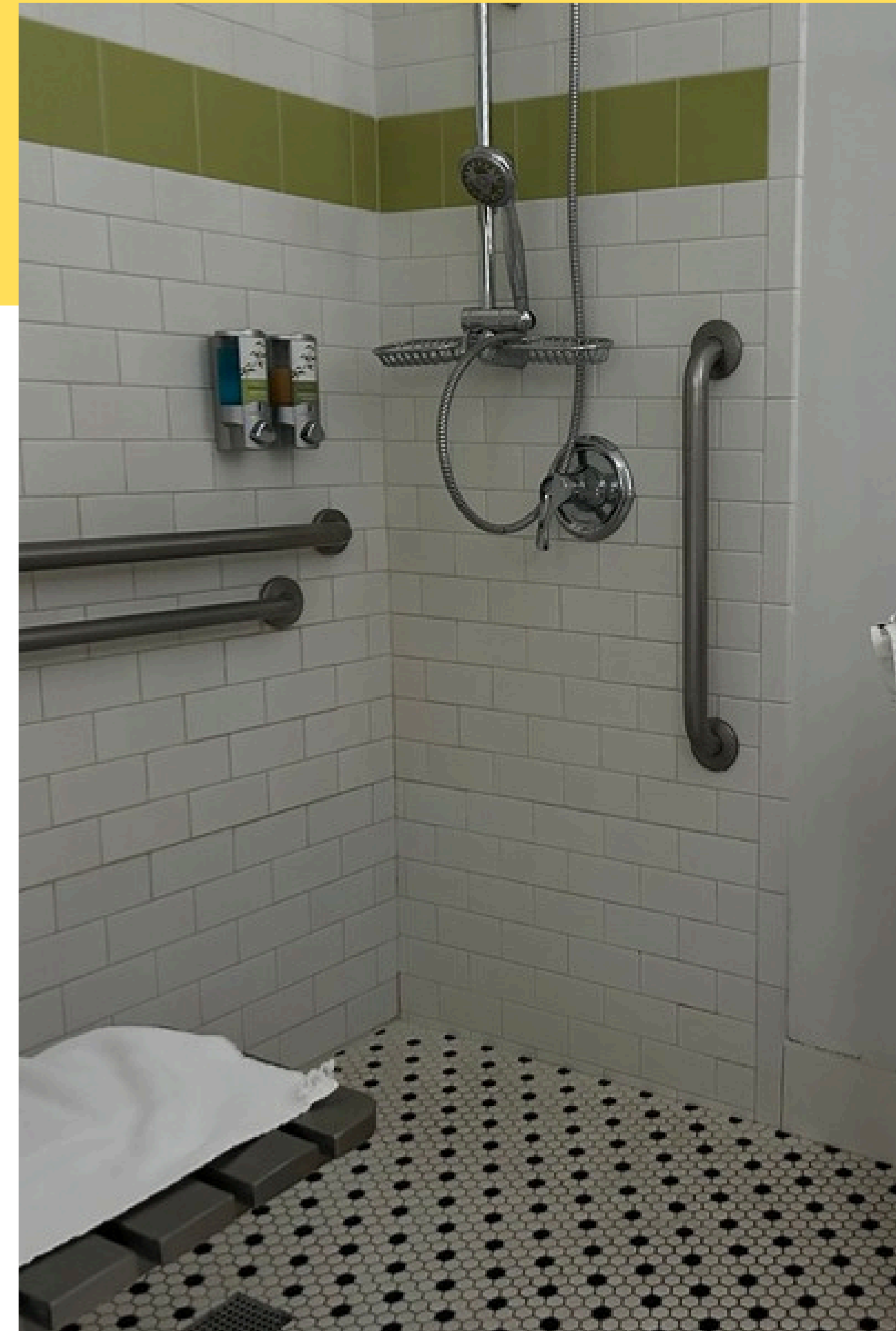
My office has been retained to respond to your September 2, 2020 letter regarding the parking conditions at the Detroit City Club Apartments. We appreciate your letter and I thank you for bringing this issue to our attention. Unfortunately, Detroit City Club Apartments does not own, nor is it responsible for the conditions in the parking structure where Ms. DeVietri claims to have experienced difficulty parking.

The entire parking structure (including the area described in your letter) is owned, controlled and maintained by Park Rite. Detroit City Club Apartments has forwarded a copy of your complaint to Park Rite's attorney and asked him to respond directly to your complaint. Also, I can see from your letter that you have also put Park Rite on notice of the alleged problem.

If you have any questions about this letter and/or Detroit City Club Apartments' response to Ms. DeVietri's complaint, please call or contact me at any time.

Inside-unit Barriers

- Mobility device clearance
- Bathroom accessibility limitations
- Unsafe transitions between rooms











Melissa DiVietri <melissa.divietri@gmail.com>

Mon, Aug 24, 2020, 11:54 AM

to dcapropmgr

Good morning!

The fire alarm was shouting to evacuate the building; I contacted the sales office and the concierge for assistance- however no response

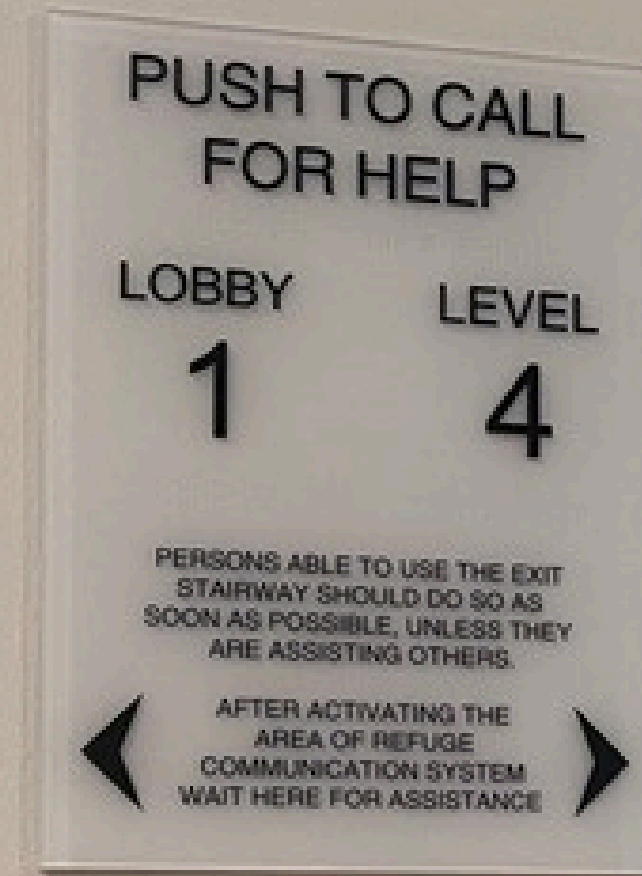
Could you provide the plan of evacuation for disabled individuals; specifically myself? I have my guide dog with me at all times, on the 22nd floor

Best, Melissa

One attachment • Scanned by Gmail



Add to Drive



**“Accessible” doesn’t
always mean usable.**

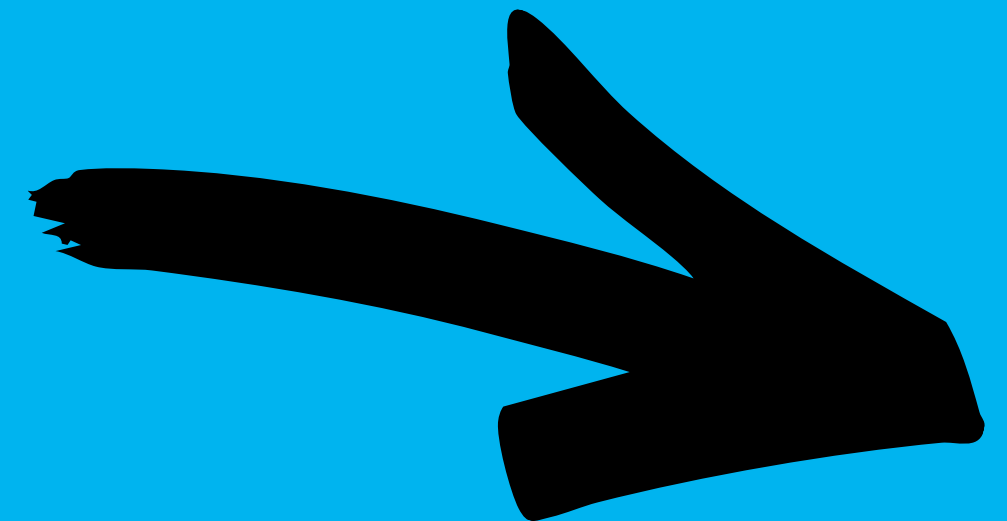
Challenges

- Difficulty requesting reasonable accommodations
- Slow response times from property management
- Requests getting ignored or lost
- Needing medical documentation repeatedly
- Fear of retaliation or eviction



**Name reasonable
accommodations?**

Comment in the chat



Reasonable Accommodations

- Automatic door openers
- Reduced door opening force
- Accessible entry routes without steps
- Ramp installation
- Keyless entry systems or accessible keypads
- Lowered intercom systems
- Accessible mailbox height
- Accessible parking spaces near entrance

Reasonable Accommodations

- Doorways for wheelchair clearance
- Light switches & thermostats
- Bathroom modifications
- Kitchen layouts
- Lowered countertops
- Accessible appliance placement
- Removal of thresholds that block mobility devices

Need to meet:

Disability-Related Need

- There has to be a clear connection between your disability and the request.

Necessary for Equal Access

- It must be needed for you to use and enjoy the space like anyone else.



Need to meet:

Reasonable (Not Excessive Burden)

This is where landlords or businesses push back—but legally, “reasonable” means:

- Doesn't cause undue financial burden
- Doesn't create major structural issues
- Doesn't fundamentally change the nature of the service



Need to meet:

Feasible / Possible

The request has to be doable.

Example:

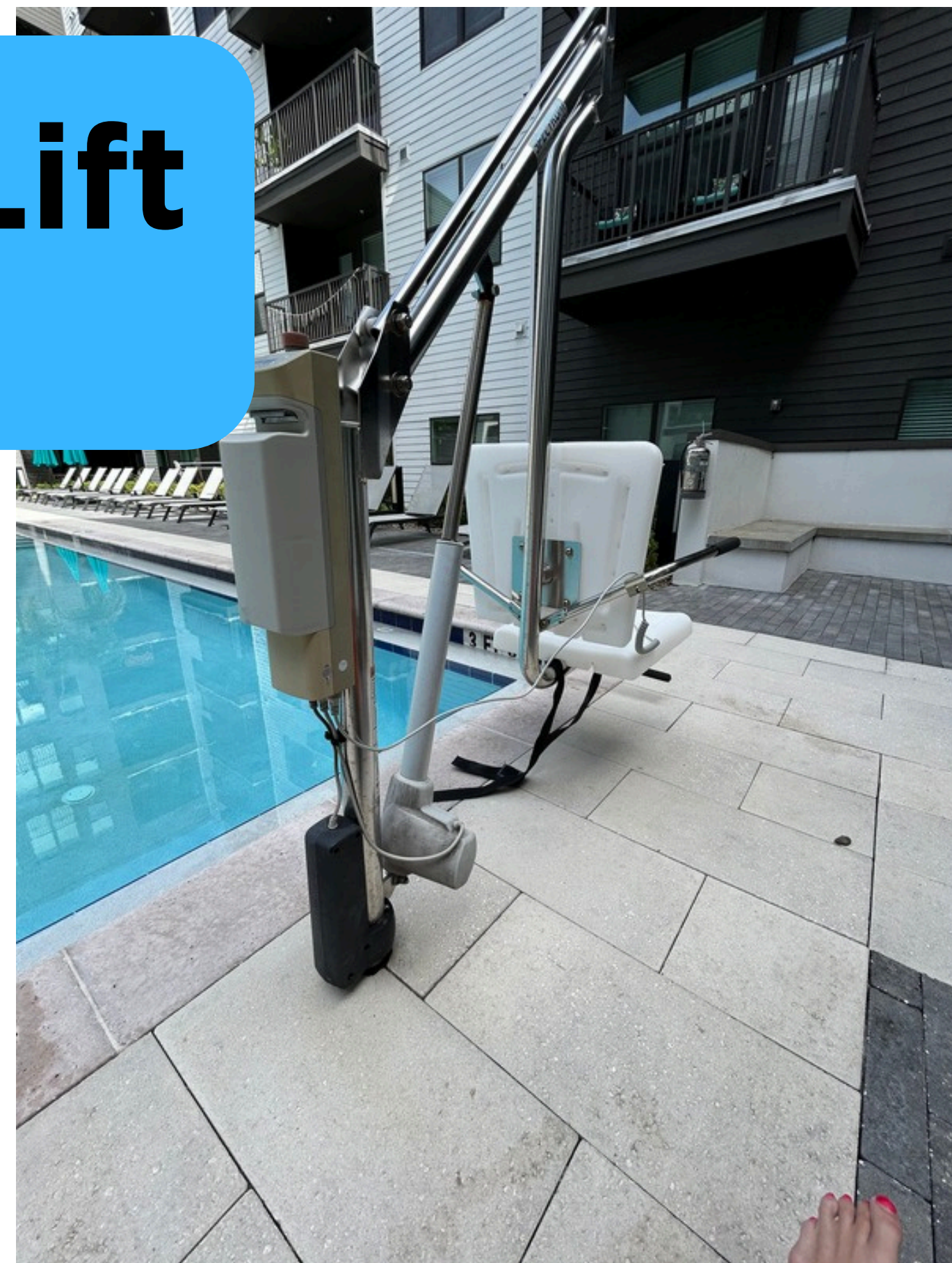
- Installing a ramp → usually reasonable
- Rebuilding an entire building → probably not



Ongoing maintenance failures

- Accessibility equipment not being repaired
- Delayed accommodation requests
- Being ignored or dismissed by property management

Access Lift Upkeep



Access Housing Prioritization

- Stronger enforcement timelines
- Faster accommodation response requirements
- Accountability for non-compliant housing providers
- Proactive accessibility inspections
- Incentives for accessible housing development

What to change:

- Mandatory accessibility audits for multi-unit housing
- Federal funding incentives tied to accessibility compliance
- Faster ADA complaint resolution timelines



How to evolve:



- Clear penalties for failure to provide accommodations
- Required accessibility education for housing providers





Summary

- Accommodation request delays lasting months/years
- Fear of retaliation when requesting accommodations
- The exhaustion of constantly filing complaints
- The difference accessible housing makes in your ability to work & live independently



Q&A

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hello
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@melissadivietri