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**Testimony of Kate Bartlett**  
**To the Joint Committee on Revenue**  
**September 22, 2015**

**SB 1517 An Act to Promote Housing Creation for People with Disabilities**

Good Afternoon Chairman Rodrigues, Chairman Kaufman and Members of the Joint Committee on Revenue,

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to address you on SB 1517 An Act to Promote Housing Creation for People with Disabilities. My name is Kate Bartlett and I am a Council Member of the Massachusetts Developmental Disabilities Council. The Council is federally mandated to educate policy makers on both the state and federal level about the intent of legislation and its impact on people with developmental disabilities. In addition, the Council works to improve the system of supports for individuals with developmental disabilities and their families by bringing together lawmakers with advocates to make sure people with developmental disabilities are included in decisions about public policy.

I just turned 30 and I live at Winslow Tower in Arlington. I have a one bedroom apartment with a fabulous balcony that overlooks Arlington Center. It is close to everything: my gym, restaurants, CVS, grocery stores, the bus line, and Starbucks. Winslow Tower is an Arlington Housing Authority property. Income qualified seniors and adults with disabilities live there. Housing Authority residents pay 30% of their income in rent, very similar to Section 8 rents. To qualify for the Arlington Housing Authority, I completed an application and was put on a waiting list. I believe my short, 2 year, wait was because I am a well-known, lifelong Arlington resident. I know other waits can be much longer and I was originally told it would take up to 10 years which was discouraging to hear.

Living on my own has made a huge difference in my life and I think it's important that all people with disabilities have the same opportunity. Many people with disabilities live in poverty and need financial assistance either from their families or the government to be able to live in their own place. Housing in Massachusetts is very expensive and many families cannot afford to fund a separate place for their daughter, son, sister, brother etc. to live in. This means in order to live independently, many individuals must rely on financially stressed government programs that have lengthy waiting lists. People with disabilities need access to more rental or home ownership financial assistance programs. SB1517 An Act to Promote Housing Creation for People with Disabilities will make it possible for more people with disabilities to live independently, in their own place, like I do. The passage of SB 1517 will strengthen Individual Development Accounts (IDAs) in Massachusetts making them more accessible to individuals with limited income, like many individuals with disabilities. SB 1517 would also require community based organizations that operate financial literacy and



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and asset training for IDA holders to be able to accommodate individuals with autism and other developmental disabilities in their classes. Increase access to Individual Development Accounts combined with improving financial education to individuals with disabilities will increase the likelihood of these individuals buying houses getting them one step closer to securing their finances and removing themselves from poverty.

In summary, the Massachusetts Developmental Disabilities Council believes that SB 1517 will have a positive impact on people with disabilities if it is passed. We appreciate the opportunity to educate Committee members about the bill and welcome the opportunity to schedule a follow up meeting with members if additional questions arise.

Sincerely,

Kate Bartlett  
Council Member, The Massachusetts Developmental Disabilities Council