



UNITED STATES SENATE
SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON AGING
RANKING MEMBER TIM SCOTT

Ranking Member Tim Scott, Opening Statement

Hearing: Preventing Tragedies and promoting Safe, Accessible, and Affordable Homes

Date: 03/31/22

Thank you, Chairman Casey, for holding another truly important hearing, and thank you to each and every witness for investing your time, your energy, and frankly your expertise on a topic that is so important to all Americans, but specifically our senior population.

I remember one of my earliest goals in life was to make sure that my mother had a safe place to live with a garage, and so I spent a lot of time and energy trying to make sure that, instead of living in apartments or — as she did growing up — in the projects, that she'd have an opportunity to own her own home, live in it, and feel the safety and security that comes with home ownership.

In addition to that, I wanted to make sure that not only does she have that opportunity, but so many others in communities that are too often living from paycheck-to-paycheck or living in marginalized communities, they would have that opportunity as well.

Over half of public housing today — public housing residents — are seniors or people with disabilities, but less than 20 percent live in accessible units.

All residents deserve the choice to have housing that meets their needs. So I am working on a bill to give older Americans and those with disabilities the resources they need to leave their public housing units and find a home on the market, if they want.

[I'm] also releasing a report ... "Housing for the Golden Years," that explores senior housing needs and what we can do to help seniors meet those needs that they have in a way that shows dignity and respect for our seniors during their golden years.

South Carolina is one of the most popular retirement destinations in the country — I'm sure it will continue to grow in its popularity — but seniors in our state still face an uphill climb in so many ways as it relates to housing. And we want to find ways to bridge that gap.

I'm inspired by efforts to help older Americans in my home state of South Carolina.

A group called Homes of Hope in Greenville builds affordable houses for working people in need. They strive to integrate seniors and people with disabilities into communities with younger adults so they can also help support each other.

Daniel Holloway was his family's primary earner until he unfortunately developed kidney failure, and because of that he could no longer afford the place that he was living. So you can imagine the breadwinner supporting the family no longer being able to do so.

Thankfully for him, Homes of Hope were able to step in to help him out during the challenging times that he went through. The good news is that he was able to see his health improve, and as his health improved, he was able to once again take on the responsibilities of caring for his family and providing the resources necessary for his home.

Thank God there was an organization, however, that was there during the most challenging and difficult times of his adult life. There needs to be more organizations like the Homes of Hope in Greenville that help support our older Americans.

For older Americans and people with disabilities, falls are one of the largest threats in the home. ... Home modifications can help prevent this from happening. And so the focus on making sure that homes are equipped with the necessary support systems is so vitally important for longevity and health.

I am so thankful that the chairman's mother was able to overcome the fall. And [chairman], I'm so thankful that she is doing well, and [it] seems like her recovery has been complete. That is a blessing, and it's good to hear, Chairman Casey.

For example, in Charleston, South Carolina, we are now building something called the "granny flats," which allows for people to use a part of their property to build a place accommodating their seniors — typically their parents or their grandparents — on their property. This actually adds more stock to a very scarce resource, which of course are the homes that people can live in.

And so I'm looking forward to seeing more innovation and more creativity in the marketplace so that we can take advantage of the opportunity to love and to care for our family members on our own property.

In addition to that, Opportunity Zones [which] we passed just a few years ago now provides another opportunity for the utilization of real estate in a cost-effective way to provide more senior housing. And the fact is that in just 2019, we saw nearly \$30 billion invested in Opportunity Zones in America. That is a great opportunity for us to provide senior housing at a lower price point and something that I look forward to discussing throughout this hearing.

Thank you so much, Chairman Casey, for holding this hearing, and I look forward to hearing the testimonies of our witnesses.

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