



Dear Vice Mayor Jan-Michele Kearney,

We are writing to advocate for the expansion of Cincinnati's home care housing policy to include funding for critical fall prevention measures, such as grab bars and other modifications, in the homes of vulnerable residents. This expansion would align with existing state requirements and address a significant public health concern in our aging population.

Falls are a leading cause of injury among older adults, and the implications for our healthcare system and community well-being are profound. According to the Ohio Department of Aging, one-third of Ohioans aged 65 and older experience a fall each year. These falls often result in severe injuries, hospitalizations, and even fatalities, placing an immense burden on families and our healthcare infrastructure. The economic impact is equally significant, with Medicare spending billions annually on fall-related healthcare costs.

Currently, Ohio Rule 3701-16-14 mandates that residential care facilities must have grab bars and other safety features to prevent falls. However, this requirement does not extend to private residences, even for individuals who qualify for the Ohio Home Care Waiver Program under Ohio Rule 5160-46-02. This program serves individuals who require nursing facility-level care but prefer to remain in their homes. These residents, who are among our most vulnerable, often lack the necessary home modifications to prevent falls, putting them at increased risk of injury.

We propose that Cincinnati adopts a policy that mirrors the safety requirements of Ohio Rule 3701-16-14 and extends them to private residences of individuals eligible for the Ohio Home Care Waiver Program. This policy would include funding for the installation of grab bars, improved lighting, non-slip flooring, and other essential fall prevention modifications.

The evidence supporting this policy expansion is compelling. A systematic review of environmental interventions for older adults found that home hazard assessments and modifications can reduce the rate of falls by 26%. Furthermore, data shows that individuals living in environments with housing code violations, such as a lack of safety features, are significantly more likely to experience falls and require hospitalization. By investing in home modifications, we can prevent falls before they occur, reducing the need for costly emergency care and improving the quality of life for our residents.

Implementing this policy would not only protect our aging population but also align with the goals of organizations like People Working Cooperatively (PWC), which offers programs such as "Stepping On" to help seniors live safely and independently. Despite the proven benefits of such programs, participation has been limited due to barriers in community outreach and engagement. By ensuring that all homes meet basic safety standards, we can enhance the effectiveness of these programs and reach more individuals in need.

We urge you to consider this proposal as a proactive step toward creating a safer, healthier Cincinnati for all residents. Expanding the home care housing policy to fund these essential modifications is a practical, cost-effective solution that will save lives, reduce healthcare costs, and demonstrate our city's commitment to the well-being of its most vulnerable citizens.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue. We look forward to working with you and other city leaders to make Cincinnati a safer place for our aging population.

Sincerely,

Learning Community 4, UCCOM '27