

To the United States Senate Special Committee On Aging

The risk of falling is a serious concern for the elderly and those with disabilities. The causes of falling are many and varied, but one excellent way to prevent falling is making sure the home is a place free of falling hazards.

Many homes are not properly equipped for people to age in. As people age and continue living in the home that might have suited them perfectly well 30 years ago, the risk of falling increases dramatically. These risks can be mitigated by moving into a facility that has amenities for older Americans and Americans with disabilities. However, there is a significant portion of the population that will not be able to afford moving into such a facility. According to an article published in the *Journal of Health Affairs*, 54 percent of all seniors will not be able to afford senior housing that they need in order to continue living a safe, healthy life by 2029, including living without risk of falling.¹ They also emphasize that this gap in care for the elderly “suggests a role for public policy and the private sector in meeting future long-term care and housing needs for middle income seniors.”

The time to act on their well-researched suggestion is now. We will be faced with these issues in just a decade, which includes increased risk and occurrences of falling. The elderly need to renovate and remodel their homes so that they can continue living there affordably, keeping the risk of falling low, while holding communities and families together.

We propose a refundable tax credit to those individuals who renovate a home and meet two qualifications: they are at least the age of 50 and they own a home. The idea behind this tax credit is to incentivize good behavior: renovating the home that an individual lives in for the purpose of making it livable and safe for them as they age. The more proactive individuals are as they approach elderly age the greater chance there is that these individuals will live without falling and live healthily.

We chose a tax credit because tax credits have been used successfully in the past to incentivize good behavior that creates positive externalities. For example, the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities states that tax credits such as the Earned Income Tax Credit and the Child Tax Credit work and are effective in improving the outcomes for middle income families and their communities.²

¹ Pearson, Caroline F., Charlene C. Quinn, Sai Loganathan, A. Rupa Datta, Beth Burnham Mace, and David C. Grabowski. "The Forgotten Middle: Many Middle-Income Seniors Will Have Insufficient Resources For Housing And Health Care." *Health Affairs*. Accessed June 03, 2019. <https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/10.1377/hlthaff.2018.05233>.

² Marr, Chuck, Chye-Ching Huang, Arloc Sherman, and Brandon Debot. "EITC and Child Tax Credit Promote Work, Reduce Poverty, and Support Children's Development, Research Finds." Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. October 11, 2017. Accessed June 03, 2019. <https://www.cbpp.org/research/federal-tax/eitc-and-child-tax-credit-promote-work-reduce-poverty-and-support-childrens>.

In the same way that having children would create positive impacts for a community and nation, keeping the elderly in the communities in which they have roots will have an excellent impact on the entire nation. By allowing them the option to remain in these communities; it captures economic growth and benefits that may have been lost, it slows the forced migration to cities some elderly and disabled face, thereby bolstering rural America; and keeps valued community members in the communities that need them. It will even reduce costs to Medicare, as there will be fewer falls occurring at the home. Above all, it gives the elderly a more affordable option, an option they might not have known they had, for maintaining their safety and livelihood into old age.

VGM Live At Home is an independently owned and operated nationwide network of providers focused on accessible home modifications and independent living solutions. Our mission is to build a trusted national network of best-in-class home access companies that remodel homes for accessible, independent, life-long living.