



International Code Consultants

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Subject: SB0624 - Favorable recommendation

Chair Feldman and members of the Education, Energy and the Environment Committee:

I am writing in support of SB0624 and the effort expressed therein to establish minimum safety requirements for short-term rental (STR) units. As a graduate of the University of Maryland with a degree in Fire Protection Engineering and as representative of the fire service, I worked at the national level, in collaboration with safety experts from around the country and STR industry representatives, to develop and promote adoption of model STR safety requirements. That work produced a new appendix in the 2027 International Fire Code (IFC), the nation's most widely adopted fire code, to establish the minimum national standard of care for STR fire safety.

In developing the IFC regulations, I reviewed several locally adopted STR regulations, and it became clear that it would benefit both the fire safety community and the STR industry to have a consensus-based regulation, developed at the national level, that jurisdictions could adopt or model at the state and local level vs. a patchwork of locally developed requirements. The benefit to STR companies and hosts who participate in that industry is having a clear and established benchmark for them to follow, by which they can be judged in the event of an accident. Absent such standards, liability must be evaluated by courts on a case-by-case basis, which leads to subjective and inconsistent determinations as to what is or isn't reasonable.

STR hosts operate a business in the hotel/motel space, and just as fire codes and society place minimum expectations for safe occupancy on hotels and motels, STR hosts should have similar obligations. SB0624 levels that playing field in a meaningful and reasonable way and VERY IMPORTANTLY MOVES MARYLAND IN A DIRECTION THAT IS CONSISTENT WITH THE DIRECTION OF NATIONAL FIRE CODES TO IMPROVE SAFETY OF STR CUSTOMERS. For all of these reasons, I urge you to vote favorably on SB0624 to protect Maryland families, visitors, and first responders.

Sincerely yours,

Jeffrey M. Shapiro, P.E., FSFPE
President