

HB0624_PHOEBE WEST

Public Safety - Short-Term Rental Units - Fire Safety (Jillian and Lindsay Wiener Short-Term Rental Fire Safety Act)

My name is Phoebe West. I was born in Bethesda, Maryland, and Jillian and Lindsay Wiener were not only my closest family friends, they were my younger sisters in every way that mattered. We laughed together, shared secrets, and knew the intimate details of one another's lives like only true family does. We always ended our time together by making plans for the next time. We never had any reason to believe there wouldn't be a next time.

That changed in August 2022, when a devastating house fire in Southampton tragically took their lives.

Jillian and Lindsay had laughter so contagious you couldn't help but smile. Their hearts were so big and generous that anyone lucky enough to be in their presence felt deeply loved. They made life an adventure. They could turn something as ordinary as a trip to Target or a household chore into a hilarious, unforgettable core memory. They lived fully. They surrounded themselves with supportive communities. They faced challenges with strength and grace.

The world is completely different without their laughter and their light. My best friends, my sisters who didn't live to 21 and 19 years old, celebrated life more vibrantly than anyone I know. We thought we had all the time in the world. We never took our bond for granted, but there was still so much life left to live together, so many milestones to celebrate, and so many stories still unwritten.

Jillian was strong in a quiet, steady way. Even at eight years old, she carried a calm confidence. I'll never forget a morning at sleepaway camp when she came into the dining hall with her sweatshirt hood pulled so tightly around her face that I could barely recognize her. When I went to hug her, I saw her face was covered in poison ivy. She hadn't told anyone because she didn't want to complain or draw attention to herself. I pulled her to the nurse's station to get proper care. That was Jillian, never seeking attention, never the loudest voice in the room, but always the most thoughtful. She offered the best advice, put others before herself, and instinctively knew when someone needed to be heard.

She found peace near water. She taught yoga classes on the beach, surfed, paddle boarded, and loved sitting in the sunshine. Whether she was by the crashing waves in Turks and Caicos, walking along the docks of Seneca Lake, or visiting the beaches of North Carolina, I can still hear her softly guiding a yoga flow with her notebook filled with yogi poses. When I called her during her semester abroad, her skin was sun-kissed, her curls perfectly salty from the ocean, and her smile wider than I had ever seen. She kept saying how happy she was and how she felt exactly where she was meant to be. There are so many stories from that chapter of her life that she never got the chance to share.

Lindsay had a heart and smile larger than life. At times, people misunderstood her genuineness and playful spirit, but she worked incredibly hard, put others first, and approached everything with a glass-half-full mindset. From Norwood School to Holton-Arms, to summers at Camp Seneca Lake, to the Tulane Spring Scholars program, we were almost identical. Lindsay was

like a mini-me though in truth, I often looked up to her. When my bedroom was painted hot pink, she painted hers the same. When she was a freshman at Tulane, I surprised her in New Orleans. We had dinner, went to The Boot, laughed endlessly, and, as usual, both fell asleep in our clothes from the night before. She was full of spirit. She served on Holton's spirit committee and loved Valentine's Day because it meant wearing pink and celebrating the people she loved. She brought joy everywhere she went.

Today, I am testifying because the lack of adequate fire safety requirements in short-term rental properties cost Jillian and Lindsay their lives.

The Jillian and Lindsay Wiener Short-Term Rental Fire Safety Act establishes essential statewide fire safety standards for short-term rental units rented for fewer than 30 consecutive days. Beginning October 1, 2026, hosts would be required to post evacuation diagrams and emergency contact information, provide a working fire extinguisher, and install interconnected, code-compliant smoke alarms that are audible throughout sleeping areas and replaced if nonfunctional or more than 10 years old. Booking platforms must notify hosts of these requirements and collect compliance documentation.

If the rental home the Wieners stayed in had been required to meet these basic safety standards like functioning smoke alarms, fire extinguishers, and visible evacuation plans, my best friends might still be here today.

This legislation will not bring Jillian and Lindsay back. But it can prevent other families from living with the unbearable grief, trauma, and daily heartbreak that ours carries. It can save lives.

There are moments when I still find myself hoping Lindsay will burst around a corner with her bright, bubbly energy, or that Jillian will appear with her beautiful curls and wrap us in one of her unmatched hugs. I carry their strength and optimism with me every day, but that does not lessen the pain of their absence.

With this Act, lives can be protected. With this Act, families can be spared. With this Act, more young women like Jillian and Lindsay can live the full, beautiful lives they deserve.

Thank you for your consideration.

-Phoebe West