

## TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB0624

### The Jillian and Lindsay Wiener Short-Term Rental Fire Safety Act

To the Honorable Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Elaine Burckardt. I am a resident of the DMV area and the cousin of Jillian and Lindsay Wiener. I am writing to you today to urge a **favorable report on SB 0624**.

On August 3, 2022, our family's world was shattered. While on vacation, a fire broke out in a short-term rental. Because the home lacked the basic, life-saving fire safety measures that are standard in nearly every other form of public lodging, Jillian and Lindsay did not survive. They were 21 and 19 years old—full of so much promise and already positively impacting their communities.

To know Jillian and Lindsay was to know how to savor life. Jillian was quiet confidence personified. She was a fierce ice hockey player, a gifted artist, and a yoga instructor who empowered others to find their own strength. Lindsay was pure joy. She was a loving spirit who stood up for those without a voice and had a rare ability to make every person she met feel seen and valued.

Their impact reached far beyond our family. They were active participants in their communities, lending their voices to advocacy and their hearts to those around them. The tragedy of their passing is that the world has lost the future contributions of two extraordinary young women who were already making it a better, kinder place. Every opportunity they had to lead, to teach, and to advocate was stolen.

One of the most agonizing parts of this loss is that it was entirely preventable. Currently, a dangerous regulatory gap exists: we hold hotels and traditional B&Bs to rigorous fire codes, yet we allow short-term rentals to operate with the lighter oversight of a private residence.

According to recent hospitality benchmarks, short-term rental occupancy in the Mid-Atlantic region grew by 10% last year, while traditional hotel occupancy fell by 2%—this demonstrates the continuously growing popularity of this new form of short-term rentals ([AirDNA US Market Review](#)). When a property in Maryland generates an average of \$65,000 to \$70,000 in annual revenue ([Rabbu](#)) and competes directly with hotels for guests, it is only right that the safety standards follow the revenue.

SB 0624 is a common-sense solution to this deadly loophole. It replaces "blind trust" with verifiable accountability. Safety cannot be based on a "check-the-box" honor system on a booking website. By requiring the collection of actual documentation—certificates and receipts—this bill ensures that platforms and hosts are held to a standard of proof, not just a standard of words.

Furthermore, the requirement for annual fire safety inspections ensures these standards are actually maintained on the ground. These inspections provide a dual benefit: they

ensure the safety of every guest, and the associated fees represent a sustainable, self-funding revenue opportunity, without straining existing budgets, for Maryland's local jurisdictions.

Maryland has the opportunity to set the regional precedent. You can ensure that "The Jillian and Lindsay Wiener Short-Term Rental Fire Safety Act" becomes the gold standard for the country, ensuring that Jillian and Lindsay's legacy is one of protection for others.

It is our responsibility to keep their memories alive through our actions. Passing SB 0624 turns our grief into tangible change. I respectfully ask for a **favorable report on SB 0624**.

Sincerely,

Elaine Burckardt