



MARYLAND  
CATHOLIC  
CONFERENCE

March 5<sup>th</sup> 2026

**HB1221**

**Public Safety - Short-Term Rental Units - Fire Safety (Jillian and Lindsay Wiener Short-Term Rental Fire Safety Act)  
Economic Matters Committee  
Position: Favorable**

The Maryland Catholic Conference offers this testimony in support of **House Bill 1221**. The Maryland Catholic Conference is the public policy representative of the three (arch)dioceses serving Maryland, which together encompass over one million Marylanders. Statewide, their parishes, schools, hospitals and numerous charities combine to form our state's second largest social service provider network, behind only our state government.

**House Bill 1221** honors the memory of two precious lives lost and seeks to prevent future tragedies by requiring short-term rental units to post evacuation diagrams, provide emergency phone numbers, and install proper fire extinguishers and smoke alarms. It also requires timely replacement of non-functioning smoke alarms and ensures booking services inform hosts of these crucial safety requirements. The intent of this bill is rooted in a basic but essential moral imperative: ensuring that every person who rents a home for even a single night is protected by the most fundamental safety measures.

Families and individuals who utilize short-term rentals—whether for vacation, temporary housing, or emergency stays—deserve to know they are in a safe space where their lives are not needlessly placed at risk. Communities benefit from fewer fire emergencies and better-prepared residents who know how to respond in moments of crisis. First responders benefit from fewer preventable tragedies, allowing them to focus their efforts where they are most needed. For the state, this bill strengthens public confidence in Maryland's rental industry and establishes clear safety expectations that protect both visitors and residents.

Beyond its practical benefits, this legislation carries deep moral weight. Catholic social teaching affirms the sanctity of human life and our collective responsibility to care for one another. Providing basic fire safety protection is not merely a regulatory action, it is a commitment to valuing every life placed within the walls of a temporary home. It is a promise that we will learn from past tragedies and ensure no family endures such preventable loss again. This act embodies the principles of solidarity, justice, and care for the vulnerable.

For these reasons, the Maryland Catholic Conference urges a favorable report on **House Bill 1221**