

## **Public Comment in Support of Maryland HB 1221**

### **Public Safety – Short–Term Rental Units – Fire Safety**

#### **Jillian and Lindsay Wiener Short–Term Rental Fire Safety Act**

Chair and Members of the Committee,

I write in strong support of HB 1221, the Jillian and Lindsay Wiener Short–Term Rental Fire Safety Act.

This legislation addresses a clear and urgent public safety need: ensuring that short-term rental units meet basic, commonsense fire safety standards. As short-term rentals have become a mainstream lodging option for families, travelers, and children, the protections governing these properties must keep pace with their widespread use.

HB 1221 establishes reasonable, practical requirements. Posting evacuation diagrams and emergency contact numbers inside units provides critical guidance in a crisis, when seconds matter and unfamiliar surroundings can create confusion. Requiring *working* smoke alarms and fire extinguishers aligns short-term rentals with widely accepted safety standards in other lodging settings. And requiring hosts to replace nonfunctioning or outdated alarms is imperative.

The bill also strengthens accountability through inspections and reporting. By requiring counties and Baltimore City to adopt inspection frameworks and report to the State Fire Marshal, the legislation promotes consistency across jurisdictions. Requiring booking services to notify hosts of these requirements—and to obtain documentation of compliance—ensures that hosts understand and meet their responsibilities and provides guests with baseline fire safety protections they reasonably expect. The State Fire Marshal’s reporting obligation to the General Assembly will further support transparency and oversight.

This bill does not impose unreasonable burdens. It sets a clear baseline: if a property is offered as lodging to the public, it must meet fundamental fire safety standards. These measures are modest in cost but significant in impact. They can prevent tragedy, protect families, and offer peace of mind to guests and hosts alike.

The tragic loss of Jillian and Lindsay Wiener makes clear why this legislation is so necessary. Jillian, a rising senior at the University of Michigan, and Lindsay, a rising sophomore at Tulane University, were vibrant, extraordinary young women—

pursuing their passions and stepping into bright futures. Their deaths are an immeasurable loss, one their family will carry forever. Families who reserve short-term rentals do so with the reasonable expectation that basic, life-saving fire safety measures are in place. This bill establishes clear, consistent, and enforceable standards designed to prevent such tragedies and to help spare other families from enduring similar heartbreak.

People of all ages deserve these safeguards. Children, who routinely stay in short-term rentals with their families, are particularly vulnerable in emergencies. Maryland law recognizes in many contexts that children warrant heightened protections. Ensuring that short-term rentals meet clear and fundamental fire safety standards reflects that same principle.

I respectfully urge passage of HB 1221.

Thank you for your consideration.

Jean Schlesinger