

Dear Senator Feldman,

I am writing in strong support of HB1221, the “Public Safety – Short-Term Rental Units – Fire Safety (Jillian and Lindsay Wiener Short-Term Rental Fire Safety Act),” scheduled for hearing on March 5th at 1:00 p.m.

The last time I spoke with my best friend, Lindsay, was on August 2, 2022. It was a normal FaceTime call. She was telling me about her trip to the Hamptons and showing me the room where she and her sister, Jillian, were staying. Just a few weeks later, we were supposed to begin our sophomore year together at Tulane University in New Orleans. Our conversation was filled with the usual mix of excitement and stress — housing chaos, upcoming classes, and all the hopes we had for the year ahead. As always, we ended the call with her giving me advice and saying, “I love you.”

The next morning, I boarded a flight to California. When the plane landed, my life changed forever. My phone was filled with missed calls and urgent messages telling me to call as soon as possible. Then I opened a text containing the article: “Two sisters perish in Hamptons house fire.” My heart dropped. In the few hours it took to fly across the country, I had lost my best friend. The hours that followed are a blur, but I will never forget the feeling in my chest when I realized Lindsay and Jillian were gone.

Lindsay and Jillian were extraordinary. Though different in many ways, they shared an unbreakable bond. Jillian embodied the spirit of a cool and inspiring older sister. She was creative, driven, and determined to make a difference. In the spring of 2022, she studied marine biology in Turks and Caicos, passionately sharing what she was learning and the impact she hoped to have on the world.

Lindsay was what I call an “everything friend.” While people often say we have different friends for different reasons or parts of our lives, Lindsay was my friend for all of it. We studied together, gave each other advice, celebrated, worried, laughed, and sometimes simply sat in silence. She cared for people in a way I had never experienced before. At eighteen, I thought I understood friendship, but Lindsay showed me that it was something much deeper. I am who I am today because of her.

No family, no friends, no loved ones, and no community should have to endure this kind of loss. HB1221 takes meaningful steps to strengthen fire safety requirements in short-term rental properties so that guests are protected. Basic but critical measures, such as proper smoke detection, fire alarms, clearly marked exits, and compliance with safety standards, can mean the difference between life and death. Short-term rentals have become increasingly common, yet safety oversight has not always kept pace. This bill helps close

that gap and ensures accountability so that tragedies like this are far less likely to happen again.

If stronger fire safety standards can prevent even one family from receiving the devastating news the Wieners received, then passing HB1221 is not only important, but necessary.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Katherine Smyth