

Testimony in Support of:
The Jillian and Lindsay Wiener Short-Term Rental Fire Safety Act
(BILL HB1221)

Testimony by: Ariella Kornfeld

Dear members of this committee,

I am writing to express my strong and unwavering support of Bill HB1221, which aims to implement and enforce fire-safety standards in short-term rental units. I believe that this legislation is critical for protecting short-term renters and holding rental companies accountable for meeting fire-safety standards. Without this critical legislation, short-term renters face dangerous risks, and there is an urgent need to pass this legislation and protect Maryland's citizens.

I choose to remember Jillian and Lindsay, whom this bill is named after, for the lives they led and the memories I have with them. They were both bright lights in the lives of those who knew them. However, in this testimony I want to share other, more painful memories. My hope is to highlight the importance of this legislation in protecting others from similar hardships.

When I first learned that Jillian and Lindsay had died in a house fire, I was working at a summer research internship. Instead of presenting my research at the final symposium, I left the internship early to attend the funeral and grieve with friends. The shock, anger, and grief followed me into my senior year, and I became acutely aware of the fire safety standards at my college. Fire alarms in my apartment building (from students cooking late at night) kept me awake long after campus safety allowed us to go back inside. During class fire drills, I carefully followed the detailed evacuation plans on the building's walls. When completing safety training for a research position, I practiced putting out a controlled chemical fire using a fire extinguisher. In each of these moments, I thought of Jillian and Lindsay. I wondered: if these routine fire safety regulations were applied and enforced in short-term rentals, then would they still be alive today?

As I grow up and pass life milestones – graduating college, moving to a new city, starting graduate school – I often think about what Jillian and Lindsay would have done with this time. They both would have loved the freedom of being a young professional, and they would have brought so much joy to their friends and communities. The loss I feel is compounded by the lost positive impact they both would have had on this world.

Moreover, there remains an urgent need to implement and enforce regulation to protect Maryland's citizens from fire accidents. I am a resident of Baltimore city and I often walk past a fire department with a banner hung outside displaying the number of fire fatalities each year to date. Each time I walk by, I am surprised by how quickly the number climbs. It is painful to know that fire continues to claim lives and leave family, friends, and communities in the same grief I felt when Jillian and Lindsay died.

Fire accidents are preventable. The evacuation plans, fire extinguishers and smoke detectors mentioned in this bill are life-saving tools. These tools must be accessible to short-term renters

and properly maintained to effectively save lives. The actions outlined in this bill provide concrete strategies to ensure short-term renters are defended against fire emergencies. When considering this legislation, I ask you to remember Jillian and Lindsay, because this legislation will protect others from their fate. I ask you to consider the pain and grief felt by their family, friends and communities, because this legislation will protect others from our grief. Finally, I ask you to consider the power you have to save lives, and act on it.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration.