

Written Testimony in Support of BILL HB1221– The Jillian and Lindsay Wiener Short Term Rental Fire Safety Act

I respectfully submit this testimony in strong support of House Bill 1221, the *Jillian and Lindsay Wiener Short Term Rental Fire Safety Act*. As a former Maryland resident for 26 years, a mother of two, and an Airbnb host for more than eight years, I believe this legislation is both reasonable and necessary.

During my time as a short-term rental host, I understood that providing a safe environment for my guests was a fundamental responsibility. My rental unit was equipped with smoke detectors, a carbon monoxide detector, and a fire extinguisher. I tested these devices periodically throughout the year and replaced batteries at least annually. The cost of purchasing and maintaining these safety devices was minimal, especially when weighed against the protection they provide.

As a frequent user of short-term rentals when traveling with my own family, I take care to rent only properties that advertise the presence of smoke detectors. I reasonably expect that the advertised safety devices are properly installed and fully operational upon arrival. Ensuring that these devices are present and functioning should be the responsibility of the host, not the guest.

The proposed legislation does not impose an undue burden on short-term rental hosts. Any minimal obligation it creates is far outweighed by the benefit of protecting lives. Other States and even some Maryland counties already require safety inspections of short-term rentals and that smoke detectors be operational. Establishing a consistent, statewide requirement for working smoke alarms is a logical and prudent step forward.

There is no question that working smoke alarms can save lives. In the tragedy that inspired this Bill, a wonderful family of five set out on summer vacation together, only to face unimaginable loss when a fire swept through their short-term rental home during the night and the smoke alarms failed to function and alert all the occupants. Two of the couple's three young adult children lost their lives. Had working smoke alarms been in place, this devastating outcome may well have been prevented.

This legislation is about basic, common-sense safety. House Bill 1221 will save lives. I respectfully urge its adoption.

Marsha Edney