

**WRITTEN TESTIMONY OF STEVEN P. HOLLMAN  
IN SUPPORT OF S.B. 0624  
JILLIAN AND LINDSAY WIENER SHORT-TERM RENTAL FIRE SAFETY ACT**

Submitted March 6, 2026

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of S.B. 0624, the Jillian and Lindsay Wiener Short-Term Rental Fire Safety Act, which adopts a number of very basic fire safety requirements for those offering homes for short-term vacation rentals.

In considering the proposed legislation, it would be useful for lawmakers to imagine the following scenario: A loving family of five decides to find respite from August heat by spending a precious few of the summer's dwindling days together at a rental home in Sag Harbor, Long Island, where they plan to celebrate the father's upcoming 60<sup>th</sup> birthday before his son and two daughters return to school. The lovely outdoor kitchen, made mostly of wood, has a low hanging wood ceiling above a charcoal and gas stove. The family organizes a family dinner and tries to cook it on the outdoor stove, but they have trouble getting it to heat up and end up cooking inside. After a festive meal, they retire to their respective bedrooms. Sometime during the night, the parents awake at the sound of breaking glass and promptly discover that the wood ceiling above the outdoor stove has caught fire, and the fire has spread into the house. There were no alarms.

Imagine that upon subsequent investigation, it is determined that the rental property has some 29 code violations, many related to electrical errors within the outdoor kitchen where the fire began and faulty smoke detectors that failed to alert the sleeping family. Imagine that the outdoor kitchen was constructed without a permit and never inspected. That the bottom grill vents were completely blocked by an attached counter, and electrical circuits that the outdoor kitchen shared with an indoor kitchen were overloaded and improperly wired. Imagine that

smoke detectors for the second floor bedrooms did not go off because of overloaded circuits and the absence of battery back-up. Imagine the property owners never even applied for a rental permit. Imagine that Vrbo, the platform on which the renting family found the rental, is found by a federal judge to have no legal duty to vet the property or even to inquire whether the property owners properly have permitted the property to be offered for rent. Imagine that platform would be absolved from responsibility even if it passed on to the renting tenants false representations by the owners about the safety of the property and its compliance with applicable code requirements, because the platform had no obligation to vet those statements.

These may not strike you as life-or-death musings, but I can assure you that they strike the bill's principal proponent that way. She is Alisa Wiener, and her two daughters were asleep in the upstairs bedrooms when the fire swept in without alert. Those two beautiful daughters – Jillian, about to start her senior year at Michigan, and Lindsay, a rising sophomore at Tulane – tragically perished in the fire that August 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2022 evening.

Now imagine that the adoption of a few common-sense basic safety requirements could prevent another family from suffering this unspeakable tragedy and the unbearable grief of burying two daughters. Require that smoke alarms be installed and maintained in accordance with applicable fire code requirements, and that they be operational, loud enough to be heard, and interconnected. Require that the owners have the necessary permits to offer the property for rent. And require the owners to certify to any booking service listing the rental that the property meets these basic requirements. That is what the proposed legislation does, and it is quite literally a lifesaver.

By way of background, I am a trial attorney and have practiced law as a member in good standing of the Maryland Bar for over 40 years, appearing regularly in state and federal courts in Maryland and nationally. And although I do not practice in the area of personal injury, I do specialize in the efficient allocation of risk and exposure, and the proposed legislation places the risk and exposure exactly where it should be: on the property owners who know the most about their own rental property and are the best positioned to ensure that it meets the necessary safety requirements to be offered for short-term rental.

For all the foregoing reasons, I strongly urge adoption of the legislation.

Respectfully submitted,

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