

To: Chair Sandra O'Brien – Ohio Municipal League. Cc: Sen. Al Landis – Local Gov. Comm.

**RE: Senate Bill 104 (Preempting Regulation of Short-term Property Rentals)**

On behalf of the Village of Zoar, I would like to state outright that I object to the proposed Senate Bill since it would have a disastrous outcome for small villages such as Zoar. I am the previous Mayor of Zoar and have served on both the Planning and Historic Preservation Commissions for many years.

Several years ago, when short-term rentals (aka Airbnb's) started to become popular, Zoar went through a living hell on this issue. Fortunately, we did get control of the situation and I will explain to you "why" and "how" we did this.

First, I will explain "why" we had to act. Unrestricted use of homes for short-term rentals will, if not controlled, result in many serious adverse problems. An average size three-bedroom house, for example, that typically accommodates a family of 3-5 people, cannot safely accommodate two or three times the number of people. Parties get out of control quickly, resulting in loud music and other loud noises disturbing neighbors. Alcohol being served results in wasted people laying in yards, and in one case, even in Village streets. Multiple cars parked (and double parked) along narrow Village streets create a safety hazard to the surrounding area as emergency fire and EMS vehicles become totally blocked from access. If there is an outdoor swimming pool involved, I don't need to tell you that as Mayor, you will soon be calling the County Sheriff to regain control. Typically, the owners of these homes do not even live in the same town, and they rent properties with no responsible adult supervision present. There are other issues that few people think about regarding short-term rentals. Zoar is a small historic town (170 people) that depends heavily on volunteers to do most things including the majority of town maintenance, help with special Festival Events, and participation in Village government. When outsiders own property for short-term rental purposes, they generally do not volunteer, and more importantly, the loss of voters is especially concerning for a small Village.

I will now explain "how" we dealt with the problem and in my opinion, did it in a very fair manner. To begin with, the Village Zoning Ordinance already allowed the use of homes for Bed & Breakfasts, and certain restricted home occupations that do not disturb residents. All other uses of residential homes require a Conditional Use permit (formerly known as a "Use Variance"). The Conditional Use permit worked out extremely well for controlling short-term rentals. The permit has a number of general conditions that apply to all such properties, and other "special conditions" that may be applied to specific properties. If property owners, for example, do not live in town, they must have a local person who is responsible for oversight. The property owners know that if they violate their permit, it can be revoked.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our experience on this important issue.

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