

Testimony in Opposition to SB 104
Senate Local Government Committee

March 12, 2025

Good afternoon, Chairwoman O'Brien and Members of the Committee. My name is Bill Schneider, Mayor, and lifelong resident of Fairview Park, Ohio, a suburb of Cleveland, Ohio.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on Senate Bill 104, and to emphatically ask that this bill be rejected.

First and foremost, this bill is a clear attack on the authority of municipalities to govern themselves under Ohio's home rule authority. Plain as day, this bill seeks to usurp our local zoning laws, direct the actions of our building departments, and handcuff local authorities from protecting the communities they were duly elected to serve. This is a one-sided piece of legislation that seeks to enrich the individual at the expense of the whole.

For the last forty-five years I have called my small residential suburb home. I have watched as original homeowners have raised their families in our city and have watched as their children have returned to buy a home. By many, we are described as a modern-day Mayberry. We go to church, we cheer for our kids at little league baseball games, pay our taxes, vote moderately, support our police, and yes, we honor our flag. We are the American Dream.

Throughout the years, despite declining input from the State, we have kept our neighborhoods strong, and our home values stable. We rarely need to worry about the Statehouse because we are self-governing, just as our state charter allows. In order to continue to keep our neighborhoods strong, we need to retain our tools of enforcement and compliance. Without these tools, I fear that the rot will set in.

Transient rentals, as these polished "short-term" rentals are now called by proponents, are poor additions to established communities.

Transient rental prevalence and ease of booking has opened up our neighborhoods to abuse and crime at the hands of short-term tenants. Let it be known that we have many police reports detailing raucous parties, nuisance complaints, theft, trespassing, property destruction, and yes, hard drug activity.

In many cases we have seen transient rentals used as staging grounds for car break-ins and thefts, because the tenants are not renting the units for just quick trips to see family members, conferences, or vacations. No, they come from halfway across the county to commit crime and prey on the wealthier neighborhoods.

Unfortunately, the transient rental industry has evolved from couch surfing to a vehicle that removes housing stock and long-term rental units from the possible inventory in which new residents can make a home. Transient rentals, by their very existence, negatively impact our

single-family neighborhoods. When a house no longer functions as a home, the whole neighborhood is made poor. No longer do residents know their neighbors. Strangers now inhabit their street, not friends, and not community members.

In my city, we have established long-term rental communities upended by landlords who have used their short-term rental business as a means of instigating tenant turnover. Long term tenants are made secondary when portioning out long established apartment amenities, such as garage space and convenient parking. Leases are not renewed in favor of bringing in temporary tenants that will not complain to the authorities if their HVAC is not working as needed. And yes, just like our single-family residential neighborhoods, long-term tenants no longer know their neighbors. Those impacted range from young families to our elderly, and they no longer feel secure.

Today I had intended to bring along a long-term resident of one such apartment complex affected by the short-term rental business, to speak here today. She declined. It wasn't because she is afraid of talking before this Committee, but rather it is because she fears reprisal from her landlord. She is not poor, or uneducated. She is not a minority. She has ample ties to her city and community, volunteering her time where she lives. She is an above average resident who just does not want to lose her home.

Her experience is just as I have described. Despite her history and long-term lease, she has been relegated to secondary by her landlord. She no longer feels safe walking to her car because of increased break-ins and thefts in the building. The neighbors who she has known for years are gone, replaced by strangers who come and go every weekend. Her community is fractured.

Full disclosure, in my previous life, before I became Mayor, I was the State and Local Tax Manager for a national, billion-dollar asset real estate company called Forest City Enterprises and its successor Brookfield Properties. I managed state and local tax compliance for residential and commercial properties throughout the United States, even providing guidance and compliance analysis on properties that my company had partnered on with such companies as Airbnb.

During my time working with Airbnb corporate I saw a clear theme: Local laws only mattered when the courts negated occupancy permits, thereby impacting revenue. To them, our neighborhoods are just markets that demand compliance when someone finally slaps their hand.

Senate Bill 104 is a gross overreach of power and a clear love letter to "short-term rental" corporations. The legislation is a vehicle that overrides our home rule, our zoning laws, drives out long term residents, and limits the available real estate upon which young families can create a home. To be frank, this legislation will only destroy the communities we have built and is a threat to the families therein.

Do not strip away our ability to defend our neighborhoods.

I respectfully request that Senate Bill 104 be rejected.