

Village of Kelleys Island
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Opponent Testimony On SB 104

Good afternoon, Chairwoman O'Brien, Vice Chair Gavarone, and Members of the Committee. My name is Ron Ehrbar, Mayor of Kelleys Island.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in opposition to Senate Bill 104. We appreciate your time and consideration on this important matter.

Kelleys Island is the largest U.S. Island in Lake Erie. There are 875 homes on the island, we have our own school, several businesses, and an ODNR sponsored state campground. Kelleys Island is a main tourist destination in Ohio. During the summer months we can average 10,000 – 15,000 visitors per week to the Island. Some residents rent their property to these visitors. We welcome visitors and families to the Island with open arms, but we must be able to protect the public health and safety of both residents and visitors alike.

To that effect, in 2024, the Village Council passed legislation that would require a homeowner who rents their property to secure a Transient Rental Permit from the Village. The purpose of this legislation is to ensure the safety of these families visiting Kelleys Island. Our legislation is based on life safety codes with inspections and helps ensure safety by providing a framework for questions like:

Is there a properly operating smoke and CO detector? Has the electrical system been inspected? How many bedrooms are in the house? How many people that can stay in a house safely?

The state, and in particular the legislature, has been helping us address our lack of a public sewer system and it would be remiss for me not to extend my gratitude on this important infrastructure project. But until we have a public sewer system, a four-bedroom house with 20 guests can put an extraordinary amount of pressure on septic systems and can create potentially catastrophic problems. If it fails, the runoff will eventually reach Lake Erie, one of our State's greatest resources. We need to protect this resource and SB 104 would have the countereffect of all the investment and good work of the H2Ohio program. This is just one very real life example of the stress on the infrastructure of an island community.

SB 104 would severely restrict local governments' ability to effectively regulate short-term rentals, a measure that we believe is a clear violation of municipal home rule authority. Local governments are best positioned to determine what is in the best

interest of their communities, and removing their ability to manage short-term rentals could have significant and negative consequences. We want to make sure when families come to visit Kelleys Island they are assured of staying in a healthy and safe environment and enjoy the beauty and excitement of being on Kelleys Island. Being an island in Lake Erie, we have considerations that other communities don't have in Ohio. Thus, we need to be able to ensure the safety of those families that visit us.

We have seen numerous instances where unregulated short-term rentals have disrupted residential neighborhoods. In many cases, these properties operate more like hotels in the middle of communities, leading to excessive noise, parking issues, and disturbances that significantly impact residents' quality of life. Additionally, short-term rentals have been linked to serious security concerns, often overwhelming local law enforcement agencies that are not equipped to manage the increased demand for service.

Residents rightfully expect their local government to maintain a level of control over zoning and land use matters, including the regulation of short-term rentals. Stripping municipalities of this authority would undermine their ability to protect neighborhoods and preserve the character of their communities. This influx of visitors places an additional stress factor on our tax base to maintain our Safety Forces and infrastructure. We respectfully urge the committee to reject SB 104 to ensure that local governments retain the tools necessary to address these pressing concerns. Thank you for your consideration, and I welcome any questions the committee may have.