

## **Opponent Testimony**

### **Senate Bill 104: Regards local regulation, taxing of short-term rental properties**

**Emily A. Keeler – Council President, City of Grandview Heights**

**March 12, 2025**

Good morning Honorable Chair O'Brian, Sponsor Brenner, and honorable committee members.

My name is Emily Keeler and I am Council President in the City of Grandview Heights. I am here today to testify in opposition to Senate Bill 104 that seeks to impose prohibitions on the local regulation of short-term rentals, such as Airbnb and VRBO.

While I appreciate the desire to assist our communities with short term rental issues, this legislation infringes on constitutionally protected home rule, thus denying individual municipalities to find the right fit for regulating short term rentals.

In 2020, our City had a property that received a multitude of complaints from neighbors. This prompted us to study the issue of short-term rentals in our community. We spoke with property owners, renters, neighbors, executives of the Ohio Hotel & Lodging Association, police personnel, and other interested parties to evaluate the core pros and cons of short-term rentals in Grandview Heights. After many months of study and input, our community ultimately landed on a balance of prohibiting nuisance properties, while allowing those in need of additional income to put their property to work by renting out a room or adjacent duplex. This also balances the critical need for housing, as studies have shown that STRs can reduce the availability of long-term housing stock when investors buy up property for short term rentals, thus exacerbating an existing issue of not enough housing stock in Grandview Heights and throughout Central Ohio.

Zoning is one of the powers reserved to local municipalities, so it is an affront to suggest to local communities that the state should limit us in how we make our zoning determinations based on the specific geographic or economic needs of our communities. If local communities are not permitted to regulate their constitutionally protected right to self-determine zoning, they will end up with

endless nuisance complaints that include parking disputes, trash problems, noise complaints, and similar concerns that would pit residents against temporary visitors and the owners of the rented properties.

Similarly, dictating to cities what they should or shouldn't charge to short-term rental hosts disregards the fact that not all communities are staffed similarly or can conduct enforcement in a uniform way. Certainly, the cost of taking enforcement action against a property owner who repeatedly violates an STR rule or has multiple properties will be very different than addressing a first-time violator.

Lastly, the decision of whether or not to change what constitutes a hotel or whether to impose a bed tax should be left to the local community, just as the decision of whether to assess additional bed taxes to fund local convention and visitor bureaus is currently up to a community. The imposition of additional taxes for local housing used for temporary stays is likely to undercut any visitor's desire to stay in a local home and experience the local flavor, walk the streets, meet the people, or visit the local boutiques, rather than staying in a corporate hotel and having a less unique experience.

In our ordinances, we did incorporate some of the solutions in the proposed legislation. The difference is that these solutions came through study and input from our residents, our rental owners, and experts. These work for our community but are not necessarily beneficial to all municipalities. This one-size-fits-all legislation will take away the opportunity for individual communities to decide what works best for their city, township, or village, and the needs of its citizens and visitors. I'm sure what works for Grandview Heights, a small, 1.2 square mile, land-locked community is much different than, say, housing needs in the Hocking Hills region, a more rural area that benefits heavily from its 4 million visitors a year.

To conclude, Senate Bill 104 will erode home rule and the ability for cities like Grandview Heights to find appropriate solutions customized to our individual communities.

Thank you for your time and consideration on this matter.

