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Opponent Testimony on Senate Bill 104
Presented to the Senate Local Government Committee
Ohio General Assembly

March 10, 2025

Chairwoman O'Brien, Vice Chair Gavarone, Ranking Member Smith, and members of the Senate Local Government committee.

My name is James Pantalone, and I am the Administrator for Howland Township in Trumbull County. We are a limited home-rule township of approximately 19,000 residents.

On behalf of our community, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to provide written opposition testimony on SB 104, which seeks to restrict townships' ability to regulate short-term rentals within our jurisdiction.

Short-term rentals, or STR's, such as those facilitated by platforms like Airbnb and VRBO, have grown significantly in recent years. While these rentals can provide economic benefits, they also bring challenges that require careful oversight and regulation.

Over the last few years, Howland Township has heard from countless residents who are concerned about the proliferation of STRs in their neighborhoods. In fact, during the 2023 Comprehensive Community Planning process, residents expressed such uneasiness over STRs that the control of STRs was identified as a planning goal. However, SB 104 undermines these local planning goals by allowing STR growth to continue unfettered without consideration of our community.

Like Howland, many townships across the State carefully plan their zoning to preserve the character of residential neighborhoods and to ensure these areas remain safe, livable, and harmonious. Short-term rentals operate as commercial enterprises within residential areas, disrupting neighborhoods by introducing frequent turnover and late-night disturbances like those at hotels and motels. Residents deserve stability and predictability in their neighborhoods, and townships should have the capacity to safeguard those rights.

Howland Township Government Offices: 205 Niles-Cortland Rd. N.E. Warren, Ohio 44484
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STR's unnecessarily burdens local governments, residents, and the community. They increase demand for township services such as law enforcement, fire protection, and code enforcement. STRs frequently bring in transient visitors who may not be familiar with local ordinances, leading to increased noise complaints, parking violations, and safety concerns. Without the ability to regulate these properties, townships could face higher costs for enforcement and public safety without the revenue to offset these expenses.

One concern shared across the state is the effect of STR's on the availability of affordable housing. Affordable housing is an issue in Howland Township as well. Investors are buying up single-family housing units to turn into commercial ventures, driving up housing prices by reducing the supply. This makes it harder for local residents—especially young families, seniors, and low-income individuals—to find affordable housing. Additionally, homes that are frequently rented, like an STR, may reduce the desirability of a neighborhood by residents looking to establish a long-term or permanent home.

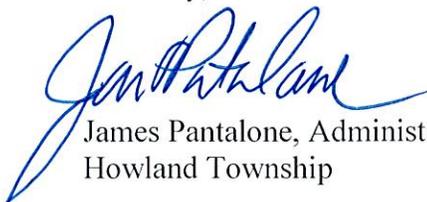
Townships, especially those operating under limited home-rule, must retain the ability to enact policies that reflect the needs of their residents rather than being subjected to a one-size-fits-all approach dictated by the State. If townships are restricted from regulating short-term rentals, it sets a dangerous precedent that could extend to other areas of local governance.

I strongly urge you to reconsider supporting SB 104 and instead allow local governments the authority to make decisions that are in the best interest of their communities. Our ability to regulate STRs should remain in the hands of those who understand the specific needs of our neighborhoods rather than being directed by state-level restrictions that ignore local context.

We ask that local communities be provided a method to impose occupancy limits and be able to control the density of STRs so that they do not concentrate in neighborhoods but are disbursed throughout the community. Our intent is to enact policies that ensure STRs are a positive addition to our community. At last count, our community has over 40 units concentrated in the northeast quadrant of the Township.

We appreciate your service to the State and trust that you will consider the concerns of local communities in your decision-making. Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,



James Pantalone, Administrator
Howland Township

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