

My name is Jeffrey Kidwell and I am writing to voice my strong opposition to proposed Bill 22-23, Transient Lodging Facilities - Short-Term Residential Rental.

I am a homeowner in residence in East Bethesda, directly across from the National Institutes of Health and Walter Reed National Military Medical Center. We converted our basement into Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) in 2015 in full compliance with all the County requirements which significantly increased our cost. We did so for the primary reason of generating additional income to supplement our otherwise fixed income. Without it, we could not afford to continue to live in our home. While we enjoyed the increase in our property value, the County also benefited through our increased tax liabilities.

While accomplishing our primary objective, we soon realized the demand for affordable, reliable short-term rental, especially serving the NIH and Walter Reed. As evidence, our occupancy rate has exceeded 75% for the past four (4) years and this year portends to be better. Of those stays, all were greater than 4 nights, our required minimum, and the average was 18 nights, even in 2020, during the Covid pandemic.

We have used Airbnb exclusively as our rental platform for many reasons and all reservations are through it. As you probably know, Airbnb automatically collects and pays, directly to the County, the required County Occupancy Tax. So the service we provide provides an additional source of revenue to the County as well as to numerous local businesses.

There is no clarity in the purpose and driving force behind this Bill. It is a radical departure from the current regulations and does not provide relief, worse, eliminates our ability to generate income and continue to provide the services we do. To not consider "grandfathering" in those of us who have done everything the County has required is disingenuous at best. Further, because of the rental demand, the practice will continue but without oversight or compliance thereby putting lives at risk. Finally, it completely fails those who rely on the services we provide so the entire community and most affected have no say.

I do not doubt that there are isolated or specific matters related to short-term rentals the County needs to address but this Bill will cause far much more harm than good. I implore you to reject this Bill and conduct the requisite research and provide opportunities for more community input to more effectively and efficiently resolve the issues. Doing so will better support and serve the entire community of those who would be affected.