

Dawn Huntley

From: Kathy Del Sesto <kdelsesto12@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, March 29, 2026 5:56 PM
To: House Municipal Government and Housing Committee
Subject: Opposition to House Bill H7657

Dear Members of the House Municipal Government and Housing Committee,

I am writing to strongly oppose House Bill H7657.

This legislation raises significant concerns regarding property rights, taxation, local governance, and the broader economic health of Rhode Island. As written, the bill creates unintended consequences that will negatively impact homeowners, small businesses, and the state's tourism-driven economy.

First and foremost, short-term rentals (STRs) are not commercial uses. They are residential properties—homes that are occasionally rented. Reclassifying them as “commercial” is a fundamental mischaracterization that undermines long-standing property rights and alters the nature of residential ownership in a way that is both unnecessary and harmful.

Equally concerning, the bill opens the door to substantial property tax increases. By labeling STRs as commercial, municipalities could impose entirely different—and significantly higher—tax rates. This creates a clear pathway for targeted tax burdens on certain homeowners, many of whom rely on rental income to offset rising costs.

The bill also expands local regulatory power in ways that add cost, complexity, and uncertainty. It would allow municipalities to impose additional licensing requirements, inspections, and potentially new building code standards beyond what is currently required for residential properties. This patchwork approach will make compliance difficult and expensive.

Additionally, the legislation effectively creates de facto spot zoning within established residential neighborhoods. It allows identical homes to be treated differently based solely on how they are used, setting a dangerous precedent that undermines consistency and fairness in zoning practices.

It is also important to note that this bill bypasses the Short Term Rental Study Commission. That commission was established specifically to evaluate these issues in a thoughtful, data-driven manner. Moving forward with legislation outside of that process undermines the integrity of the state's approach to this complex issue.

Furthermore, there has been no comprehensive economic impact study conducted. The potential effects on property values, local businesses, and municipal tax bases remain unexamined. This lack of analysis makes it difficult to justify such sweeping changes.

Finally, this bill poses real risks to Rhode Island's tourism economy. Short-term rentals are a critical component of the state's lodging infrastructure. Overregulation or reduced supply will have ripple effects—decreasing visitor spending, harming local businesses, and ultimately reducing tax revenues.

In summary, House Bill H7657 is a direct threat to property rights, small business owners, and the broader local economy. I respectfully urge the Committee to oppose this legislation.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Kathy Del Sesto

6 Greenbrier Rd

Narragansett RI 02882