

We own two houses in Middletown, one is our primary residence and we rent the other. The one we rent has never been out of my wife's family. Her aunt and uncle were the original owner's and had no children. We bought it from their estate in 1997 and "gave" it to our two children in an Irrevocable Trust in 2017. It is in no way a commercial property and is a very desirable area of Middletown. We rent it out for longer periods, presently over two years lease. We have had shorter terms in the past and gotten loud noise complaints from a few neighbors. We responded to all complaints and have not had any problems for several years now. We are against this proposed bill for the following reasons::

### **STRs Are Not Commercial Uses**

Short term rentals are residential properties. They are homes, not hotels. Reclassifying them as commercial is a fundamental mischaracterization that undermines long standing property rights.

### **Opens the Door to Massive Property Tax Increases**

By labeling STRs as "commercial," municipalities would have the ability to tax them at entirely different, and much higher, rates. This creates a clear path to substantial and targeted tax increases on property owners.

### **Expands Local Regulatory Power**

The bill would enable towns to impose additional licensing requirements, inspections, and even building code standards that go beyond what is required for residential homes today. This adds cost, complexity, and uncertainty for owners.

### **Creates De Facto Spot Zoning in Residential Neighborhoods**

This legislation allows municipalities to treat identical homes differently based solely on use. That is effectively spot zoning within established residential neighborhoods, setting a dangerous precedent.

### **Bypasses the STR Study Commission**

Importantly, this bill did not come out of the state's Short Term Rental Study Commission. That commission was established specifically to evaluate these issues in a thoughtful, data driven way. Ignoring that process undermines the integrity of the legislative approach.

### **No Economic Impact Study**

There has been no comprehensive analysis of the economic consequences of this bill. That includes the impact on property values, local businesses, or municipal tax bases.

### **Risks to Rhode Island's Tourism Economy**

Short term rentals are a critical part of Rhode Island's tourism infrastructure. Reducing supply or overburdening operators will have ripple effects, including decreased visitor spending and ultimately lower tax revenues for the state and our communities.

This bill is a direct threat to property rights, small business owners, and the broader local economy.

Please vote AGAINST this bill.

Thanks for your consideration, Bob and Joan Walker