

Dear Representative Carson,

I am writing to express my concern regarding any proposed restrictive ordinances on Short-Term Rentals (STR) in our community. While I understand the intention behind these regulations is to address issues related to housing availability, neighborhood character, and safety, I believe that overly restrictive measures will have unintended negative consequences for both residents and the local economy.

I started my STR in 2018 following the death of my mother, who for 12 years occupied the ADU that I had built for her. The initial expense for the ADU was significant, as were the ongoing upkeep and tax burden. The financial solution for the overall upkeep of the property was to use the unit as an STR. Fast forward to today, my taxes have more than tripled, and overall expenses have risen exponentially. Having the STR has allowed us to stay in our home despite these increased costs. As an added benefit, I have met many wonderful people from all walks of life and many different countries.

However, this is only part of the story. Yes, we are an STR, but we are also an LTR. Our STR only rents in the high season, June through September. The rest of the year, we rent to traveling military personnel, healthcare workers, and students. We provide a valuable service to the community for both long- and short-term stays. Our guests seek the comfort, homelike feeling, and flexibility our ADU provides. Limiting and overregulating our use does not help with the local housing issues, affordable housing does. Unfortunately the hospitality wages are not in sync with the housing costs in tourist communities.

Over-regulation is like putting a Band-Aid on a bruise; it looks like it's helping, but it's really not. Let's focus on the cut. The state and local communities in Rhode Island have been laggards in addressing affordable housing. We rate near the bottom in new housing builds, especially those that are affordable. Tourism and health services are the two leading industries in Rhode Island. Focusing on tourism, people want to visit our beautiful state to enjoy all we have to offer, and the availability of STRs for travelers is a large part of the equation. I have hosted guests from all over the world who come to visit our area. Many of these guests have stated that they would go elsewhere if accommodations like ours were not available. We are part of the reason they come.

Short-term rentals have become an integral part of the hospitality industry, offering unique and affordable accommodation options for tourists and visitors. They also provide significant economic benefits to homeowners who rely on the additional income to offset rising living costs, property taxes, and maintenance expenses. Many residents, including myself, have invested in our homes with the understanding that short-term rentals are a viable option for generating supplemental income.

Restrictive STR ordinances could lead to several adverse effects, including:

1. **Economic Impact**: Limiting short-term rentals will reduce the income of many residents who depend on this revenue to make ends meet. This reduction in income can affect local spending and the broader economy, as homeowners may cut back on their expenditures.
2. **Tourism Decline**: Our community benefits from tourism, which brings in visitors who support local businesses, restaurants, and attractions. Restrictive STR regulations could deter tourists from choosing our area, leading to a decline in tourism-related revenue and potentially harming small businesses.
3. **Property Rights**: Homeowners should have the right to use their property as they see fit, within reasonable limits. Restrictive ordinances infringe on this right and can devalue properties by limiting their potential uses.
4. **Community Impact**: STRs can enhance neighborhoods by fostering a sense of community and cultural exchange. Many visitors stay in residential areas to experience local life, contributing to the vibrancy and diversity of our neighborhoods.

Rather than imposing restrictive measures, I urge you to consider alternative approaches that address the concerns without eliminating the benefits of STRs. For example, implementing fair regulations that ensure safety, limit nuisances, and require proper licensing and accountability can strike a balance between preserving neighborhood character and supporting economic opportunities for homeowners.

In conclusion, I respectfully request that you reconsider any proposed restrictive STR ordinances and explore more balanced solutions that benefit all stakeholders in our community. Feel free to contact me if you want to discuss my experiences and full story. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Gilbert Stringer