

Chris O'Brien

From: Lauren Stephens <laurenstephens314@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, May 23, 2024 3:15 PM
To: House Finance Committee
Subject: Oppose Bill H-8183

To RI House Finance Legislatures

Housefinance@rilegislature.gov

Opposition to H8183 Bill

As a RI tax-payer, resident, and homeowner, I understand the need for the state to maintain a healthy economy. I believe that legislation proposed to achieve that goal needs to be given careful consideration allowing adequate time to evaluate the intended and unintended consequences for any changes made to existing laws to be effective. I also believe that any legislation should be ethical in concept and should not unfairly target one segment of the population in order to achieve that goal. The proposed H8138 bill does not meet these standards putting an unfair burden on specific homeowners with the potential for a negative impact on our economy which relies heavily on tourism.

This bill would recategorize private homes as hotels in an effort to collect a 5% tax as additional revenue for the state. However, a commercial hotel corporation and a private residence cannot be considered the same. Whether a homeowner lives in the home full time, or rents it out for a year, a month or a week, it doesn't change the fact that it is still a private residence. Designating the arbitrary period of more or less than 30 days cannot and should not be used as criteria to define it as a hotel.

There are many reasons people want & need a place to stay in RI that may not be considered "permanent" or "long term". Families come to stay a few days, a week, or a month for graduations, weddings, funerals, temporary work assignments and vacations. While they are in RI, these families and individuals spend their dollars on food and essentials as well as entertainment, museums, sports, cultural educational and other special events. They contribute to the local economy and keep business alive and well.

We are lucky to live in RI and still own a second home here that has been in our family for a hundred years. Like many other homeowners, we are only able to keep and maintain this home by renting it during the periods we are not using it for ourselves or our families.

We provide a special home-away-from-home environment for families and guests, many of whom return year after year to enjoy RI and create lifetime memories.

Adding a 5% increase in taxes for time periods that don't meet the arbitrary criteria of 31 days would create an unnecessary and unfair hardship on homeowners who offers their (sometimes available) homes to travelers and "temporary" visitors. It would also have a negative impact on the economy as visitors would ultimately have fewer lodging options and would pay higher prices for the ones they could find.

Please continue to search for the most effective and ethical means for keeping our state's economy alive and well. However, as RI relies heavily on tourism for many businesses to thrive and encourages "short-term" visitors by advertising all the state offers as a good vacation spot, it would be unfortunate to discourage visitors and tourists by

increasing their costs and limiting their opportunities for places to stay. Do not recategorize homes as hotels. Do not add 5% to the homeowner's burden. Do not pass this bill.

Sincerely,

Lauren Stephens

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