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Thursday, June 24, 2021

The Honorable Mike Shirkey
Majority Leader
Michigan State Senate
S-106 Capitol Building
Lansing, MI 48909

The Honorable Jason Wentworth
Speaker
Michigan House of Representatives
164 Capitol Building
Lansing, MI 48909

The Honorable Jim Ananich
Minority Leader
Michigan State Senate
S-105 Capitol Building
Lansing, MI 48909

The Honorable Donna Lasinski
Minority Leader
Michigan House of Representatives
167 Capitol Building
Lansing, MI 48909

Dear Leader Shirkey, Speaker Wentworth, Leader Ananich and Leader Lasinski

We write to you today to express our united opposition to Senate Bill 446(S-1) and House Bill 4722(H-1). These bills, as currently drafted, leave our communities unable to sufficiently regulate non-residential land use in our residential neighborhoods.

Each of us believe that short-term rentals have a place in our communities and are an important part of Michigan's tourism economy. However, they also need to fit within the unique context of the individual neighborhoods where they operate. These bills attempt to support short-term rentals, but they do so by imposing a top-down, one-size-fits-all policy that leave us unable to address the needs and concerns of our residents. They also restrict our ability to address the critical need for long-term housing or meet the demands of our workforce.

Supporters of this legislation have stated that short-term rentals are a private property rights issue and fear that some communities may ban the practice of short-term renting. This fear is unfounded. Our communities cannot ban, nor are we seeking to ban, short-term rentals. Exclusionary zoning is already against the law. Our job is to listen to our constituents and balance the needs of our residents and visitors through reasonable regulations.

Housing is one of the greatest needs we currently face. Residents struggle with housing that is too expensive for their budgets—or they spend more money and time on long commutes to and from work and services. When short-term rentals are allowed to proliferate without oversight, it can

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further deplete the available housing supply and drive-up costs for residents. Collectively, we need to add tens of thousands of housing units in the next few years to meet the needs of people at all budget levels. Having the ability to respond to this demand will be critical to our future success. In their current form, these bills undermine our ability as local officials to make informed decisions that impact our residents and who entrusted us to respond to their needs and the needs of the community.

The private property rights argument also fails to recognize that short-term vacation rental businesses in residential properties are a commercial activity that is increasingly operated by out-of-state investors. Communities already set limits on the amount of other commercial activity in residential neighborhoods, such as in-home daycares or home salons, and this issue is no different. Local leaders are best positioned to determine what level of short-term rental activity is appropriate to maintain the residential character of a neighborhood.

Adding to the complexity of this conversation is our ongoing responsibility to protect public health and safety. Like other rental properties, it is in the best interest of everyone that local governments retain clear authority to protect the sleeping space of non-owner-occupied housing and provide some assurance that the buildings in which renters and guests are staying are safe.

Again, it is our belief that short-term rentals have a role in our communities. We are not advocating for, nor do we support banning short-term rentals. We encourage you to seek compromise legislation that balances the basic rights of homeowners to rent their properties on a short-term basis, meets the individual needs of our local communities, and does not exacerbate the dire need for more attainable housing units.

Thank you for your consideration of this important local matter.

Sincerely,



Mayor Rosalynn Bliss
City of Grand Rapids
Chair, Urban Core Mayors

Co-Signed: Christopher Taylor, Mayor of Ann Arbor, Mark Behnke, Mayor of Battle Creek, Kathleen Newsham, Mayor of Bay City, John B. "Jack" O'Reilly, Jr., Mayor of Dearborn, Derek Dobies, Mayor of Jackson, David Anderson, Mayor of Kalamazoo, Stephen Gawron, Mayor of Muskegon, Dr. Deirdre Waterman, Mayor of Pontiac, and Brenda F. Moore, Mayor of Saginaw

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