

Written Testimony

CASE NO. 19-15

Text Amendment to Subtitles B, H, K, & U to Authorize Short-Term Rentals

Submitted by: Alexander Bant

Position: Against amending the text in the residential zoning code

10/11/2019

TO ZONING COMMISSION FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA:

I'd like to start with a familiar story. A local DC family of five bought a row home on L Street NE near Union Market earlier in 2019. In mid-March, they had a busy week coming up. They had several critical client meetings, a few long drives for work, juggling the kids' extracurricular schedules, and preparing for extended family to come visit. The problem was they were awoken between 1am and 3am every night that week due to loud noises from the house next door. Repeatedly, over and over again. They heard yelling, laughing, music, and thumping. Again, and again each night. They were dead tired, unable to function, in a bad mood, and frustrated. All they wanted was a calm, peaceful, and respectful neighborhood where they could feel good and enjoy life as a DC resident. They came to realize that an Airbnb was operating next door. They thought, "how could a mini-hotel be open right next to their house in a residential neighborhood", and "how are houses allowed to be used for commercial purposes when they zoned for residential use". They've been awoken over 66 times some far in 2019 due to this Airbnb.

And it's not just this family. It's anyone living next to the English basement seeking short-term renters or living next to a house for short-term transient guests. In fact, it's nearly 116,000 DC residents that live next to, on-top of, or below a short-term rental in a residentially zoned neighborhood in the District of Columbia. That's potentially 5 million nights of sleep disrupted across the District each year. We can't put DC residents at risk in an area where they purchased property expecting to live next to other D.C. residents, not loud, disruptive transient guests and businesses.

We don't usually get to pick our neighbors, but there's a natural respect that develops when we live next door to each other. Short term guests on the other hand have no inherent reason to be respectful of their neighbors. They come for a day or a week and leave behind anyone they upset.

Secondly, by changing the text of the residential zoning code you're proactively pushing more than 25,000 D.C. residents out of affordable housing. Yes, this decision about changing the zoning code will be make or break for 25,000 D.C. residents as to whether or not that can access affordable housing.

I just wrapped up serving on the jury of a homicide case here in the District. One of the factors that brought violence to the family involved in the homicide and court case was their lack of access to affordable housing and the ability to escape violence in the community. It really hit home for me that we as leaders in the community need to create access to affordable housing for D.C. residents so that families are not forced to move into neighborhoods where crime and violence are prevalent. Allowing the residential zoning code to be amended to allow for mini hotels to operate is a huge leap backwards in creating affordable housing for all. Even with nightly caps and rentals only allowed in primary residences, we still are taking nearly 8,700 rental units off the market for D.C. residents if we change the residential zoning code. So,

please ask yourself if you're comfortable forcing all of these residents and families to choose less safe living conditions so that well established people can put a little more money into their savings account each month.

Please leave commercial activity with commercial and mixed-use zones. No one needs to be woken up all night or forced to live in a dangerous neighborhood due to the decision in front of you today.