



Hello! My name is Lauren Wolfe. I work for a consumer group focused on travel issues, Travelers United. I wanted to voice my overwhelming support of making sure home sharing is a possibility throughout the District.

I want to make a few points. First, home sharing is not just for tourists. Home sharing provides housing for many people that are in DC for an extended period of time. Second, home sharing brings money to areas that need it. Third, it empowers residents of DC and not corporations. Fourth, it makes affording the city more possible for residents of DC who are homeowners. For these reasons and more, we need to have home sharing accessible and allowed in every corner of this city. Anywhere there is a home, home sharing should be allowed.

First Point – There is always a lot of talk about home sharing bringing in tourists. It definitely does bring in tourists but many guests are not tourists. They are people who have a three week research project at the Smithsonian. They are interns here for the summer working on Capitol Hill. They are a DC couple whose house flooded and they need a place to stay for two months while their own house is repaired. I remember the days before Airbnb when I needed to find a place in DC, I had to blindly trust Craigslist and say a prayer that the housing I was booking to be an intern in DC for six weeks was reliable, safe housing. Now, with sites that have trustworthy peer reviews, people moving to DC for the first time with an internship know that they have reliable housing.

Second Point – I currently live in Ward 8 in Washington, DC. There is no grocery store anywhere near my house. There is one sit down restaurant. There is absolutely no hotel. Despite all this, Airbnb brought 29,300 guests to stay in Wards 7 and 8 in 2018. These guests provide essential feet on the ground for the few businesses in our area. With few commercial businesses in the area, foot traffic can be low in the middle of the day. A sandwich shop in Anacostia told me he gets Airbnb guests almost every day stopping in his shop in the middle of the day. Hotels will not build around here anytime soon. Home sharing is a great way to bring more people to these areas to support local businesses who need all the customers they can get.

Third, allowing home sharing throughout the District allows residents to make a few dollars off tourists, interns, researchers and workers who otherwise may have stayed at a hotel. We should be celebrating putting money in the pockets of the people and not major corporations like Hilton or Marriott. This city is in a crisis of affordability. We should do everything in our power to put money into the pockets of the people who actually live here.

Fourth, this is a very expensive city. Some older people bought houses in this city for \$25,000. Now, their house is valued at a million dollars and they have to pay taxes on that amount. Airbnb is an essential way for people to rent out rooms in their home so that they can STAY in their home. Even for those of us who have had to compete in the recent DC market, renting out a room or a basement on Airbnb is a huge offset to a substantial mortgage. This is an incredibly oppressively expensive city. We should not make this city harder on homeowners, we should make it easier. Renting a room or a basement on Airbnb, or a whole house while a family is away so that another family can stay in DC, is something that allows people to continue to stay in, afford their house and thrive in DC.

For these reasons and more, I hope you will approve making home sharing throughout the city. Airbnb and HomeAway and other home sharing platforms are tools of affordability for District residents. These are modern ways that people rent rooms in their homes. To not allow people to Airbnb a room is to not allow them to rent a room in 2019. We should allow people to rent rooms, to home share and to give homeowners the tools to make this city a tiny bit more affordable. Where there are homes, there should be home sharing.

Thank you,  
Lauren Wolfe