



many languages
one voice

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Council of the District of Columbia
John A. Wilson Building
1350 Pennsylvania Ave NW, Suite 410
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Chairman Mendelson and Members of the Council,

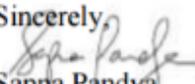
I am the Executive Director for Many Languages One Voice (MLOV), a non-profit organization that works to protect the rights of immigrant communities in the District. MLOV is a membership-based organization and the overwhelming majority of our members are limited English proficient workers, students, parents, and DC tax-payers. I write this letter to strongly urge you to take the necessary steps for the Short-term Rental Regulation and Affordable Housing Protection Act of 2017 to move forward towards passage by the DC City Council without further delay.

Our organization fully supports the bill as it will protect the dignity and integrity of our local immigrant communities and ensure housing in our residential areas is kept for our people and families. The abuses brought by Airbnb and other short-term rental platforms due to inadequate enforcement and tracking mechanisms in heavily immigrant populated areas, such as in Columbia Heights and Adams Morgan, only works to worsen the gentrification and inequality our communities are already grappling with. As recently as last year, an entire 21-unit rent-controlled apartment building in Columbia Heights was listed online for short-term rental. These illegal hotel rooms cheating our DC residents from housing in their own neighborhoods is an outrage and I urge the Council to act immediately.

Further, if building owners intend to use their property for the purposes of a business, then they need to follow the District regulations that other property owners are required to abide by. Registering their building and obtaining a permit inspection and business license are basic requirements that do not add any undue regulatory burden on owners. In fact, this legislation would make it easier to comply with the law by creating a new category of permit for short-term rental housing.

We believe that the final version of the short-term rental bill should require that residents only host short-term rentals in their primary residence. We also believe that the only way to minimize the temptation to convert housing into fulltime Airbnbs is to keep the vacation days low. Most people have two weeks of vacation per year. As result, we think 15 days is a reasonable cap. The 15 day cap and a primary residence requirement will go a long way toward maintaining the residential character of our neighborhoods.

Simply because companies like Airbnb provide a so-called innovative approach to the rental business should not put them above our laws. Setting such a precedent in a changing and growing modern economy is dangerous and cheats our residents. I encourage the Council to put District residents over what is an undeniable example of unprecedented corporate greed.

Sincerely,

Sapna Pandya