

House Bill 3589

Good morning, Chair Dexter and members of the House Housing & Homelessness Committee.

My name is Carlene Benson and I speak for my neighbors as well. My husband and I live in a National Historic District not far from here where we have multiple short term-rentals (STR) with strangers going in and out, and have been the cause of loud parties and fights in the yard, all of which is on the neighbors to police and report.

We take a great deal of pride in our historic neighborhood and work hard to maintain them at extra expense to meet the historic codes. We are a very small neighborhood and due to these STRs we've lost full-time families/neighbors who could contribute to the fabric of the neighborhood. These are non-owner-occupied businesses in a residential historic area.

All when we have a housing crisis in Salem.

Testimony before Salem City Council recently suggested that short-term rentals provide affordable housing. The STRs in our neighborhood have rented for almost \$3,000 for 6 days. Work that out for a full year and there's nothing affordable about it. We have a caring neighborhood sensitive to and respectful of the homeless and have history to support that. But short-term rentals are not the answer. They are very expensive vacation housing.

We were horrified to learn that the comings and goings at an STR 2 blocks from the neighborhood elementary school where our children attended and about 4 minutes from the State Capitol, hid out-of-state drug cartel activity -- involving hundreds of thousands of dollars in illicit drugs, automatic weapons and cash -- and provided "cover" for trafficking from Texas, California, Utah, and Washington. The FBI busted this STR house and the resulting article in the Statesman Journal, dated 2/12/23, reported that this type of covert usage was becoming a large problem across the country. Appallingly, the manager of this property testified before the city council but was not asked about and did not disclose the criminal activity that occurred under their watch. In the article she bragged effusively about how much money she could make from these STRs. There are 3 licensed in Salem, she owns 21. There is no regulation. The cartel was due to move into a second home of hers the next day.

Dr. Dexter and committee, my neighbors and my family support the testimony that you have heard from Representative Andersen, from Mr. Winterowd, and Mr. West.

We are grateful for your work and hope you can continue to address the need for affordable housing and of the homeless.

Thank you.

Carlene Benson, Salem