

Ladies and gentlemen of the Committee,

Thank you for your time and consideration. My name is Nicole Zaagman. I am a short term rental owner and operator and I run a farm and agritourism operation in Byron Center, Michigan called Parkside Farm. I started hosting farm stays in 2022 and offer a unique, Short Term Rental experience for families year-round at our 100+ year old farm house.

I am a member of the Kent County Farm Bureau Board and serve as the Kent County Young Farmer Co-chair. Kent County Farm Bureau recently held a Legislative Breakfast in Grand Rapids which was well attended and a time of productive conversation. It was at this breakfast I had the opportunity to connect with this Committee's Chair, State Representative John Fitzgerald.

At the legislative breakfast, I introduced a question regarding support of a statewide agritourism bill and in connection, spoke with a few in attendance about the importance of farm stays and Short Term Rentals as a valuable diversification option for Michigan farms. I was able to bring up Bill 5438 in the midst of those conversations.

I hope to share an alternative perspective in regards to Bill 5438 and Short Term Rentals that are located on agriculturally zoned lands, used for farm stays. With the agriculture industry facing numerous challenges across the state and increasing labor and production costs, farmers are looking for new opportunities to supplement their income through agritourism.

I would urge this committee to consider the unnecessary burdens that Bill 5438 would impose upon not only Short Term Rental hosts and owners in high residential and tourist driven areas, but also those in rural, agricultural focused communities and towns who are utilizing Short Term Rentals as a necessary means of agriculture and farming diversification.

After being briefed on MiSTRA's recent testimony, I too, would not support the bill in its present state. I would be in favor of no additional taxes for local hosts and limited state regulations. After months of working with my local township of Byron Center, I am happy to share as of this past Monday, a new Short Term Rental ordinance was passed by the township board.

In 2024, Short Term Rentals in Byron Center are:

- Already registered at the township level, receiving inspections and paying for permits
- Paying applicable 6% occupancy tax/use tax and 5% Kent County excise tax
- Facing booking challenges in an ever evolving and changing economy
- Adapting to increased expenses such as energy, insurance and permitting costs

I respectfully request amendments be made to the proposed bill by eliminating additional taxes and regulatory influence at the state level. Making such amendments would allow hosts to make a living doing something they love and provide a valuable experience to their local communities. Thank you.