

April 27, 2023

The Honorable [first name] [last name]

[Chamber Name]

[Capitol Office address]

[City], [State] [zip code]

Dear [insert Salutation] [last-name):

The Pennsylvania Association of Bed & Breakfast Inns (PABBI) is a non-profit trade organization representing Pennsylvania’s Bed & Breakfasts/Inns. Formed in 2012, our mission is advocacy and education.

Over the past seven years, PABBI has been working to level the playing field with short-term rentals in terms of providing safe and comfortable lodging and fair business operating requirements (licensing, safety standards, insurance, occupancy limits, etc.).

Short-term rentals, especially Airbnb, have revolutionized the lodging market. Some of these online home-sharing companies offer more listings than the top five major hotel brands have, combined. Unsurprisingly, these additional lodging options have kept both bed and breakfast and hotel rates in check. Hotel rooms that would often sell out now typically remain open during peak periods. This industry has always welcomed competition; however, it is essential that any competitor experience fair and equitable regulation and treatment like our hotels and bed and breakfasts.

Among other things, hotels and bed and breakfasts are required to:

* obtain a license/occupancy permit to operate and are subject to the Uniform Construction Code for new construction and renovations;
* remit hotel occupancy tax and local county/city room tax;
* purchase commercial insurance;
* have annual inspections of boilers, fire extinguishers, etc.;
* adhere to local zoning ordinances; and
* have adequate parking available.

“Hosts” or “owners” offering their home or vacation rental properties for short-term rentals ought to be held to the same standards of regulatory enforcement comparable to bed and breakfasts and hotels.

Over the past several legislative sessions, a Bill was introduced into the House Tourism & Recreational Committee regarding online home-sharing tax fairness. These bills required online home sharing platforms to register with the Department of Revenue and regularly submit a list of PA properties to ensure tax compliance. It would further allow the department to share that information with county treasurers to ensure local compliance and enforcement.

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With the start of a new legislative session in 2023, it was determined that a new approach to leveling the playing field with short-term rentals is needed. PABBI’s Executive Director was selected to chair the STR Sub-Committee formed by the PA Restaurant & Lodging Association’s (PRLA) Tourism & Lodging Committee along with the Tourism Coalition.

This STR Sub-Committee will research the current STR marketplace, what other states and cities across the country are doing to manage STRs, and make recommendations on next steps for Pennsylvania. The Sub-Committee will convene a group of stakeholders consisting of other organizations and associations whose members are impacted by STRs to solicit their input. To date, a number of municipalities across PA have implemented ordinances to restrict and/or manage STRs within their jurisdictions.

The intent of the Sub-Committee is not to stop short-term rentals. It is about making sure everyone running a lodging business is competing on a level playing field. At a time when this industry pivots to recovery and rebuilding from the COVID-19 pandemic, it is critical for lawmakers and key stakeholders to come together to find a solution to level the playing field to protect the safety of guests, the security and peace of residential neighborhoods, and ensure fair competition. Competition pushes us all to do better for the communities we operate in, and the guests we serve.

On behalf of PABBI, we ask that you consider how short-term rental hosts, if not regulated, will impact legitimate bed and breakfasts who may no longer be able to compete. This is a complex task and we will share with you the outcomes of the STR Sub-Committee in the coming months.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss our position on short-term rentals, please call our Director, Rose Mape at 717-525-7799 or email pabbi@painns.com. You can learn more about our position at www.painns.com/advocacy, specifically our “Requirements for Short-Term Rentals” document.

Sincerely,

Carl Kosko, Chair

PABBI Board of Directors

Owner, Inn & Spa at Intercourse Village

cc: Zak Pyzik, Senior Director of Public Affairs, PRLA

Lauren Brinjac, Senior Director of Legislative Affairs, PRLA