



House Bill 1221

Public Safety - Short-Term Rental Units - Fire Safety
(Jillian and Lindsay Wiener Short-Term Rental Fire Safety Act)

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**
WITH AMENDMENTS

To: Economic Matters Committee

Date: March 5, 2026

From: Dominic Butchko

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** HB 1221 **WITH AMENDMENTS**. This bill advances a straightforward and important goal: ensuring that short-term rental units meet baseline, common-sense fire safety expectations—clear egress information, functional smoke alarms, and readily available extinguishers.

Short-term rentals via large-scale platforms are a relatively new and rapidly evolving land use category that did not exist at scale when many local zoning ordinances and rental housing frameworks were originally developed. Counties are still in the transitional stages of building workable regulatory approaches—balancing property rights, tourism and economic activity, and neighborhood impacts like noise, parking, trash, and public safety—while also determining how best to structure licensing, enforcement, and inspection capacity. As this market continues to mature, counties are working in real time to identify where short-term rentals complement communities and where they may create problems for neighbors.

Counties share the bill’s life-saving priorities and appreciate the sponsor’s focus on practical, in-unit measures that can meaningfully reduce risk for guests and first responders. MACo’s amendments (outlined on the following page) are intended to clarify certain provisions and ensure the bill does not unintentionally preempt local authority.

As the frontline actors in land use and regulatory policy, counties remain committed to working with the Committee and sponsor to advance this lifesaving legislation. The proposed amendments are clarifying in nature and support the bill’s ultimate goal. For these reasons, MACo urges the Committee to issue HB 1221 a **FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS** report (*amendments follow on the next page*).

MACo Amendments for HB 1221:

Amendment #1 – Clarifies that the report shall include the units inspected by the county. In some jurisdictions, short-term rental platforms are actively seeking to avoid compliance with local regulatory requirements. While counties are working to bring those platforms into compliance, it may be difficult to accurately identify the full universe of short-term rental units currently operating outside local oversight.

On page 5, in line 18, after "OF" insert, "INSPECTED"

Amendment #2 - Clarifies that nothing in this section requires a county to authorize short-term rentals in its jurisdiction. Counties across the State are still evaluating the impacts of this emerging land use, and its appropriateness varies community by community.

On page 6, after line 7, insert,

(E) NOTHING IN THIS SECTION MAY BE INTERPREPTED TO REQUIRE A LOCAL GOVERNMENT TO AUTHORIZE THE USE OF SHORT-TERM RENTALS OR PREEMPT THEIR AUTHORITY TO BAN OR LIMIT SHORT-TERM RENTALS IN THEIR JURISDICTIONS.