

Wednesday, May 1, 2019

Committee on Local Government and Municipal Finance

Joy Gaasch, President, Chamber of Commerce Grand Haven, Spring Lake, Ferrysburg

Reference HB 4046

It is essential, for our community and any community to plan a balanced approach to accommodating the short-term rental business. Balance in the number of short-term rentals per neighborhood is important for the residents that make the neighborhoods their homes, and this proposed legislation removes all local control that ensures the integrity of neighborhoods. As our communities continue working diligently to bring families and individuals back to Michigan to fill the many available job openings in manufacturing and the trades, it makes no sense to pass any legislation that will affect our community's or any other community in our State, the ability to create sustainable, stable neighborhoods that attract year-round residents, that help us address our labor shortages, support our local school systems, become active volunteers and philanthropists with a vested interest in the community in which they live.

Grand Haven's downtown is a Main Street Community, our retail members in the core downtown area used to have a strong and vibrant year-round business supported by year-round residents that lived in the neighborhoods surrounding the downtown. Over the past five years the year-round customer base has changed dramatically due to the increase in short term rentals. Those neighborhoods that were once filled with local families raising kids, working and shopping within walking distance or with access to public transportation to get to their places of employment now sit empty during late fall, winter and spring. Cost of housing for young families, where they once could get into a starter home have now risen to a level that is unaffordable for entry level workers. We have a shortage of workforce housing in our community and throughout Ottawa County, which we are working to address. Lack of local control of zoning for short term rentals will not help us address this issue in the City of Grand Haven, Ferrysburg or Spring Lake.

We support local control of zoning. Communities are best suited to make decisions about local land use and zoning as the elected and paid staff in those communities are answerable to the people they serve. We recognize the importance of the economic development impact of the tourism industry at the state and local level, and the need for short-term rentals to accommodate families and groups that wish to stay in a home setting. We also recognize that the wording of this legislation will change short-term rentals from commercial to residential which will also be a loss of revenue to the State of Michigan in Sales and Use Tax.

This proposed legislation assumes one size fits all, and in Michigan because of our amazing natural resources and the individual personalities of the many villages, townships and cities, one size does not fit all, nor should it. Pure Michigan promotes many unique attributes of communities throughout Michigan. MEDC and MSHDA are assisting communities to create a sense of place and the state is providing programs to help reestablish the trades to fill the need for manufacturing employees and is encouraging folks that left Michigan to return. It seems ironic that communities, under home rule, are encouraged to develop their unique personalities, to attract residents to this great state, help business open and provide employment and plan for their growth, while they work to find ways to fund and replace aging public infrastructure with less and less revenue from the state and this bill takes away local control of a communities ability to manage short term rentals that will ultimately change the nature of some communities in the long term from being those healthy year-round vibrant communities that are part of Pure Michigan.

The Board of Directors of the Chamber of Commerce Grand Haven, Spring Lake, Ferrysburg opposes HB 4046