

Dear Urban Affairs Committee members,

Thank you for considering this written testimony. Due to work obligations I was unable to attend this hearing, but rest assured that is the only thing preventing me from speaking to you in person against this bill, which will have a disastrous effect on Texas families and homeowners. **Allowing investors to buy up any Texas home and operate it as a de facto hotel is NOT in the best interest of Texans and their neighborhoods.**

I strongly urge you all to vote NO on HB 2551.

About a year after my husband and I made the biggest investment of our lives and bought our first home, (it was also shortly after the birth of our first child - we now have 2...) the owner of the home next to us moved out, converted the ownership to a LLC (or similar), and started operating it as short-term rental (STR). **We now had a corporation for a neighbor. It was a 6 bedroom home advertised to sleep 18! The impact on the surrounding neighbors was palpable.** Everyone braced themselves for Thursday when a new crowd of strangers would arrive. Many times they were noisy and disrespectful. I have one particular memory of trying to enjoy a Thursday night dinner with my family on our back porch: The bachelors renting the home next store for the weekend were doing keg-stands in the back yard. Every time one of them would take a turn, the rest would chant, "What's wrong with [name], what's wrong with [name], what's wrong with [name], HE SUCKS DICK!" It was awful. There were also times where guests would park their cars in our driveway, have outdoor DJs play late into the night, shoot off fireworks, and throw parties with so many people that our street looked like a 4 lane traffic jam (completely red) at 2am on google maps because there were so many cars parked up and down the street. Red cups could be found in the street gutters a quarter mile away. One morning I discovered a rain-soaked Philly cheesesteak melted into the top of my mailbox, no doubt left by a drunken "guest" once the cab arrived early that morning.

Even when the guests were "nice" and "quiet" the sick feeling in our stomachs lingered. It didn't change the fact that next week the guests might not be so nice, that the house was EMPTY half the week and filled with strangers the other half, that I was wary of letting my child play outside. **There were no children in that house for my daughters to grow up with, no family to look out for our home when we were out of town.** Couldn't borrow milk or sugar from a house that no one lived in...It was like a black hole on our street. And we felt horribly trapped: how could we expect to sell our home in this situation - **would you want to buy a house that had a full-time hotel next door?**

The scariest part was that, while it was legal in Austin to do so, the owner of the STR next door to me was growing his business, buying up 5-6 bedroom homes all over the neighborhood to operate as hotels. Some he advertised as sleeping up to 24 people! The full-time STR business was quickly starting to hollow out a wonderful family neighborhood.

Thanks to some serious elbow grease (many long, late nights (I'm talking 2AM, no foolin') at City Council and other commission meetings, presentations to council members and their aides, etc.) and the help of other neighbors all throughout the city of Austin who were similarly affected, the City Council in 2015 voted not to issue any more licensing for these investor owned, full-time STRs. You can still rent out your primary residence, and a certain percentage of apartments per building can be STRs; you can still have them in mixed-use and commercial neighborhoods, but the investor-owned type will be completely phased out of residentially-zoned areas by 2022. As a result, I'm happy to say that, since he was unable

to get any more permits, the STR owner next to me decided to shut down his "STR business" and look to other ventures, he sold the STR/LLC next door to me to a lovely family of 4 with two young children. We have our neighborhood back!

HB 2551 would undo all that and allow ANY home, ANYWHERE in Texas (unless protected by an HOA with the right language in their by-laws and enough money to duke it out with violators in court) to become a full-time hotel. The uncertainty it would introduce into home-buying and the misery it would bring upon families all over Texas keeps me up at night.

I hope my sincerity comes through in this letter - I'm a hard working professional mom who would much rather be spending time with my kids than testifying at the capitol reliving this nightmare - I'm not making any money or have any financial stake in this other than wanting to preserve the beautiful neighborhood that I live in and that I hope my children will grow up in.

Please, please, please, I urge you all to preserve the property rights of Texas homeowners and to vote NO on HB 2551.

Thank you again for your time and consideration,



Jessie Neufeld

Please do not hesitate to contact me via email or phone if you have any additional questions about my experience with short-term rentals. 512-705-2691.