



Portsmouth Fire Department

Fire Prevention Bureau

January 30, 2019

Chair Melanie Levesque
Senate Election Law and Municipal Affairs Committee
107 North Main Street
Concord, NH 03301

Re: Testimony regarding suggested amendment to SB 69

Chair Levesque and Members of the Senate Election Law and Municipal Affairs Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you. My name is Carl F. Roediger and I am a Deputy Fire Chief in the City of Portsmouth.

Portsmouth is a unique community. The great percentage of residences are single family homes constructed in the early to mid-1900's. Given the desirability of the City and the surrounding area, rising home values are fostering a wave of owners who advertise individual rooms or entire houses for short-term rental. Until recently, this practice went relatively unnoticed. Our interest with this practice is the safety and welfare of our guests.

It is a well-documented fact that smoke detectors save lives. In recent years, the addition of carbon monoxide detectors has also proven to be a life saver. To that end, the State of New Hampshire enacted RSA 153:10-a entitled: Automatic Fire Warning Devices and Carbon Monoxide Detection Devices in Dwellings.

In its simplest form, the law directs that the owners of single-family dwellings, multi-unit dwellings, and rental units SHALL install smoke detectors, and, if there are attached garages and/or appliances that burn solid, liquid, or gas fuel, carbon monoxide detectors. Property owners are required by this statute to install these devices. The Office of the State Fire Marshal has published informational bulletins which clearly outline the requirements of the law in plain language.

While we wholeheartedly endorse the proposed change to the exception contained in RSA 153:14 II(a) for short-term rentals, we feel that the language of the bill, as presented, does not consider the design of required smoke and carbon monoxide detection systems. To verify the proper installation of a smoke and carbon monoxide detection system, an inspection of all sleeping areas and all occupied levels of the dwelling is required. It would be impossible to verify the operation of any detection system if the scope of an inspection was limited to a single space. We therefore suggest the words "that part of" be removed from the proposed language and the new sentence read:

The exclusion in the preceding sentence shall not apply to any dwelling that is used as a short-term rental as defined in RSA 31:103-b.

Any short-term rental legislation must protect the guest, regardless of where the bed is located. Those who choose to offer accommodations to the public, whether it be a single room, or an entire

home, have a responsibility, by law, to ensure that their guests are afforded the most basic of life safety protection.

What we are asking for presents no additional financial burden to a homeowner. Homeowners should already have smoke and carbon monoxide detectors installed in their homes. It's not only the law, but it's the right thing to do for the safety of one's family. All we are asking for is the legal authority to ensure that the required devices are present, and the system is functioning.

Thank you for considering the suggested amendment to SB 69 outlined in this testimony.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Carl F. Roediger". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Carl F. Roediger, Deputy Fire Chief
City of Portsmouth