

To Councilman Mike Bonin:  
Re: airbnb/ home sharing

Mr. Bonin,

I would like to express my concern that there may limitation on our short term rental. We have a 22 year old son who we support in another place of residence. He has been diagnosed with bi polar disorder and is taking medication. He is still struggling and we use the rent from our airbnb to financially support him.

As our guests come and go, we support our local markets, restaurants and other services by recommending them to eat or shop there. We have collected business cards from many of the restaurants in our area and also give raving verbal recommendations to our guests.

Home sharing has had such a positive impact on my local community because it has allowed guests to stay in our neighborhood who otherwise would not be able to afford to do so. I enjoy being somewhat of an ambassador to this particular area of Venice.

Please allow us to continue sharing our home to support our community and our family!

Marsha Whittaker

Dear Councilman Bonin,

I am writing to you today because I needed to share what an incredibly positive impact short-term rentals (via airbnb and VRBO) have had on my life – and wanted you to know personally the negative consequences it would have if I could no longer rent my home.

After losing my mother to cancer in 2003 and experiencing some very difficult years following that - due to financial uncertainty, needing to fix the house, not knowing how to pay for it all, grief, depression, fear of the future, etc ... airbnb was suggested by two close friends as a potential temporary solution for my financial challenges and it gave me hope! Airbnb became my light at the end of a long dark tunnel !!!

After fixing my house (been there since 1982), I listed my home on airbnb in 2012 and haven't looked back since. I do not plan on doing this the rest of my life, but at least until I can find full financial stability on my own. Airbnb has acted as a financial safety net and has provided me the income to improve and up-keep my home, find myself, my ways and my path because it afforded me the time I needed to become who I am today.

As I get older, this is also giving me hope as possible income if I can no longer work doing highly demanding physical labor. This might become my retirement activity and income (but who knows ... I am not there yet).

Since I started renting my home, not only has it given me peace of mind – knowing that I will make enough money to cover my mortgage, pay for repairs and maintenance, and giving me some financial breathing room - but knowing that I have a somewhat consistent income has allowed me to take a leap of faith and start a new business! After taking a pottery class with a friend, I started working from my garage and as I outgrew my tiny work space ... I have since moved to an 8000 sq ft warehouse in South Central Los Angeles. We are now providing local stores and restaurants with handmade ceramics – bringing hand-crafted and small scale manufacturing back to Los Angeles! This could NEVER have been possible without the income airbnb allows me to make ... which now funds this new venture as well !!! Renting my home not only pays for my life but it also pays the rent on my new business and allows me to give back to the community by way of jobs and small donations (and this is just the beginning).

Now – between the house rental and my pottery business – there are over a dozen people who work for/with me in one capacity or another and as my business is growing, I hope to hire a few people full time. We even had Congressman Curren Price (of the new 9th District) tour the facility and he was quite excited by what we were doing on the block and the positive impact it is having in South Central Los Angeles.

On top of the dozen individuals helping me in those two ventures, I also employ the services of a laundry facility, an additional cleaning service, a handyman & repairs service. The impact of my guests on the local restaurants and stores are also felt because I can see where they shop and eat. We all benefit! When my guests want to extend their stay and I cannot accommodate them, I always recommend the local Inns and hotels. When we have weddings or small events at the house, I also recommend the local hotels as not everyone can stay here. None of this could have been made possible if it hadn't been for the short-term rental / shared economy! My guests use the local spas, restaurants, catering services (sometimes), attend local yoga and pilates classes, hike the neighborhood, go to the local farmers markets ... all these local businesses feel the positive impact because when people travel, they often eat out and buy local, bring souvenirs from their trip, create word of mouth about the places they enjoyed most, and spread the word about their favorite hangouts. When people rent homes such as mine, they live as locals: not tourists!

We touch lives, change people's perception of certain neighborhoods, cities even ... and create work! On top of all the advantages just mentioned, the TOT taxes paid to the city represents millions of dollars being poured back into the city and the local economy! We all win!

Renting my home as a short-term rental has not only had an extremely positive impact on the people who work with me, but also on my guests! I rent mostly to families who want cozy and private time while in Los Angeles ... quite a few have already moved to the city, and some are

considering it. I have people from all over the world stay in my home – and the experience changes their lives! Mother Teresa said "*Love begins at home, and it is not how much we do ... but how much love we put in that action.*" That is the way I approach each "booking" ... it is a personal experience and I get to meet incredible people from different states and countries looking to relax, recharge and become re-inspired. I host with mindfulness and love, not just for my guests but for the community and the environment. Renting a home provides an experience that a hotel cannot provide – we are not competing, we are just providing a different experience. A Seaworld cannot compete with a Disneyland as they are two different entities ... providing two different experiences!

There are hotels, motels, Inns, and B&Bs ... Short term rentals are just next on that list. Hotels don't lobby against motels or B&Bs ... why would they choose to come after short-term renters? It doesn't make any sense! We are all part of the hospitality business ... but each of the listed categories just offers a different experience (yes, I keep using these words again and again because that's all it is ... a different experience!!!!). We live in a time of choice; let's keep that way! Let's look at the positive impact short-term has on the thousands of people who host and those who rent. We cannot punish the thousands of people and businesses that are affected in a positive way by the sharing economy just to satisfy a few dissatisfied hotel chains! There is room for all of us! Just because we have guests that rent our homes once in a while doesn't mean they won't go to a hotel on another trip or for another reason! Please consider the positive aspects of this sharing economy. This new era of sharing emerged because people were not satisfied with the choices they had before ... I don't see why we can't all co-exist.

Now that people have been made aware of the sharing economy – we cannot undo or move backwards. We must all adapt and grow. This is the future and it is very positive. Los Angeles can be in the forefront of new ideas and concepts. Become a pilot program for other cities and the world. Create easy, logical, and fair protocols to help new hosts be in alignment with legislation and pay the TOT taxes. Maybe create an amnesty of some sort and allow people that amnesty for the first year of their experience because some people will want to test whether short-term rental is something worth doing for them or not. Maybe some people are not aware or intimidated by the TOT process. Maybe we need to learn to be flexible for the greater good ... start fresh – Los Angeles has not "lost" income ... on the contrary, it is about to make an enormous amount on a monthly basis!!!! Embrace it, don't punish the past, move forward and make it easy, logical, fair, consistent. Don't punish those of us who are doing it right just because of a few bad seeds. Yes, some people will abuse the system. Yes there will be some negative experiences on both side of the spectrum, but wouldn't that be the case no matter what, no matter the field or industry? Think long-term impact – this is an exciting program! This is an exciting future! Please help us shape it in a positive manner.

Thank you for your time!

D.L.

Los Angeles host (who pays her TOT every month!!!)