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Sent: Thursday, February 18, 2021 11:15 AM
To: San Juan County Council
Subject: Vacation Rental Permit Moratorium

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Dear Council Members, ,

This letter is to voice my opposition to the SJC Vacation Rental Permit Moratorium. Please take the time to read it as it affects most of the people I know as well as myself and I have put a lot of time and effort to write to you so that you can hear my point of view.

I have lived here since 1988 when my parents moved our family here to San Juan Island. When we moved to the island, we did not have a house. We literally showed up with fingers crossed that we would find an affordable place to rent. I remember very well how scary that felt. My parents had a tough time finding an affordable place at first but eventually, we found one. We were a family who rented for the entirety of my childhood; moving from place to place. Finding affordable housing has always been a challenge here on San Juan Island because there are a finite number of houses. But my parents wanted to live here so we did what we had to do to make it work. Again, this was 1988. And finding rentals was not easy...even back then. While growing up, my dad worked at the Little Store and my mom got a job at Islanders Bank where she eventually became a top loan officer winning awards and accolades for her work starting up Homes for Islanders and finding ways to help islanders obtain funding for their homes even when sometimes the bank could not do it.

I would suggest the county build affordable long-term housing through public funds as well as through private investors; and not rely solely on homeowners to be landlords with their investments.

I have been fortunate enough to become a homeowner as an adult. I was a landlord of a long-term rental for several years and even though I was a renter for much of my life and have the deepest empathy for people who can't afford to purchase a house of their own, I found it to be an incredibly challenging experience:

The first renter had a dog that tore up our laundry room, the second renter put a hole in the wall and had the police called over to the house several times according to the neighbors, and the third renter -not once did she pay her rent on-time; sometimes getting several months behind which meant I had to come up with the money to cover her living there. This is after I did reference checks to try to find good renters. For me, a good tenant pays their rent on time, is friendly with their neighbors, and leaves the property in the same or better condition than when they moved in. These are things that really matter to homeowners. Because of the uncertainty of Covid19 last year and the fact that I was always having to cover the costs associated with my tenant being a couple months late on paying her rent, I decided to sell the property and luckily, someone I used to work with was able to buy it as a first-time homeowner and moved into it. Knowing she lives there feels good.

Now, I know this does not depict all renters and my intention is not to bash renters whatsoever, that is not the type of person I was raised to be. I am just giving you my experience so you can have some perspective. However, my sister has had a very positive experience with her long-term renter and has kept their rent incredibly low to keep them in the house because she does not want to experience what I did. My point is that not all homeowners of second homes want to be landlords. It can become a second job and take a lot of energy.

Some might say "just make laws so they can't rent to tourists and then those houses will open up for people to rent long term". But many of those houses will in fact sit empty because they were bought with the intention to be used by the owners who live off island and visit from time to time, so they would never long term rent it; they are not looking to be a landlord and they can afford not to be. So, they would just keep the house empty vs. offering it as long term a rental.

Local islanders who live here in the islands with second homes, can't be expected to be up for the challenge of being a landlord either and house everyone who wants to live here. It is not a job for everyone. Of the people I know who live on San Juan Island and own a vacation rental, every single one of them are using the vacation rental money to supplement

their income and pay their mortgages so that they can work and live here and have a house to sell or rent out when they retire. Mortgages are typically higher than what people consider to be *affordable housing* so local homeowners would more than likely sell their rental house if they were not allowed to rent it legally. Then most those houses would be sold to mainlanders because the homes would be *too expensive for affordable housing* and so we would either see empty houses or the new owners would move here and our year-round population would increase; creating new challenges that the county council will have to deal with.

Over 35% of the houses in the county are actually empty houses that serve as a second home to people from off island. *They are not vacation rentals.* The latest study shows that vacation rental houses with permits made up **only 7%** of the total amount of houses in the county. But these rentals as well as hotels and inns are a **huge engine** for our local economy and are major job creators.

Eventually after I became an adult, my parents were able to buy the house they were renting at the time. Out of the 3 daughters my parents raised, all three of us ended up working in tourism on San Juan Island and eventually my dad got on board too as a shuttle driver.

70% of the jobs in fact here fall under the umbrella of the San Juan's tourism industry whether they realize it or not; construction, plumbing, electricians, dry wall, flooring, landscaping, tree cutting, all of the shops, restaurants, the people who manage our parks, even child-care because most of the children's parent's jobs fall somewhere under the tourism umbrella.

I have been employed by tourism for 28 years. One of the jobs that I have had since the mid-nineties, was housekeeping. In 1995 I found out that if I were a housekeeper for a vacation rental company, I could make the most money I had ever made in my young life. You see, a good housekeeper in the San Juan Islands is unbelievably valuable! And people who own vacation rentals are willing to pay them what they deserve. People without a college degree like me can actually make a living wage at it as a full-time job or to supplement another job. I would compare the pay to what construction workers make. \$20-30 per hour typically but some are as high as \$35 who have the best reputations for cleaning. I think this is important for you to know. Unfortunately, as a woman we don't get as many good paying job opportunities that don't require a college degree...but with housekeeping, you just need an eye for perfection and cleanliness and have the drive and energy to do it. There are many vacation rental housekeepers here on San Juan Island. Many. Many. I still do it every summer. I have cleaned every summer since 1995 as a part time job and encourage other people to do it too because it pays so well. This moratorium affects housekeepers and their families. I worry this moratorium is a precursor to more anti-tourism agendas from our council.

Life in the islands are more beautiful now than it was when I moved here in 1988 because of tourism and the money it has brought to the islands. We have better trails, better roads, better restaurants, better activities, better marinas, better airports, better downtown buildings, better farmers markets, better shops, better parks, and the grocery stores have majorly improved. Have you been to the Oyster Farm on San Juan Island since the new owners made it tourist friendly? What about the new tasting room at the Vineyard here on San Juan Island? They are amazing. We all benefit from vacation rentals and the tourism it brings whether we know it or not and whether we like it or not.

Let's find solutions to the issues raised by the few people who complain about living next door to a vacation rental without punishing the entire county and screwing over homeowners and the working class. If people don't have jobs because you made too many rules, then they won't be able afford a home here *no matter what you do*. If our service workers go away, some of the reasons *you and I* love living here will also go away.

Thank you for your time.
Angie Krieger
Friday Harbor