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From: Kristen Nimmo <kristen@salish.online>
Sent: Thursday, February 18, 2021 10:04 AM
To: Council Public Comment
Subject: Vacation rental moratorium

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Dear Council Members,

I am writing in opposition of the moratorium for vacation rentals on Orcas Island.

I am the co-owner of a small vacation rental business on Orcas. I run the cleaning section of the business.

When I first moved to Orcas Island I was recruited by Island Market. I was the deli/bakery manager. Shortly after my arrival I became pregnant and after a struggle to continue with my position at the market I was let go. I had no idea what I was going to do and how I was going to be able to support my family. We were generally concerned that we would have to leave a place that my husband has called home for 48 years and where I wanted to raise my child. So in short, I became licensed and insured and opened a cleaning business.

At first I cleaned residential homes. I saw all these wonderful empty houses that families stayed in for a couple weeks a year and let sit and get dusty for the majority of the year. It broke my heart knowing that there is so many people looking for a place to live here and that there is all these empty houses. Then a fantastic opportunity came my way when I met my business partner and we started a local option for vacation houses to be managed.

Last year I made close to six figures and was able to purchase a home on island with my husband.

The problem I see with lack of housing here is making it affordable. With vacation rental management companies such as Vacasa and NW Island Escapes monopolizing the rental houses and paying cleaners \$17/hr vs the \$100-\$450 a house like I make, people who work for them can't afford to purchase a home here. Many of the people who rent their homes out can't afford to live here. They rent their house most of the year and stay sporadically to enjoy a home they want to retire in. It's no different than the house that sits empty 50 weeks a year except these people are in need of help to pay their mortgage to keep their house and giving an opportunity for money to come to the island from tourism. We need that money here to survive. Everyone of us depends on tourism.

I say that there needs to be control on the non local management companies. They should only be able to have a certain amount of houses in order to allow business like mine to thrive. This year I was able to bring in two more subcontractors paying \$35/hr. Making living on the island more affordable.

People need help to pay their mortgage, and have the ability to enjoy their home. The problem is housing affordability. Programs like April's Grove and Opal are great. However they don't help the middle class people like me. There are little

options for middle class people. Between HOAs not allowing manufactured homes in their neighborhood and building a home costing around \$300 a square foot nobody can afford to live here. Renting to multiple people over a year span is much more gentle on a home than one family for a whole year as well. People want to keep their home in good shape.

I am grateful for vacation rentals. We need to find more options of how can we make it benefit the islands and the locals, creating more jobs that are profitable so more people can afford to live here. There isn't lack of housing. There are too many houses empty as second homes and tons of empty ADU houses on people's property as well.

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