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**Statement of Proposed Testimony Before the Subcommittee on Cybersecurity, Information
Technology, and Government Innovation
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform
U.S. House of Representatives**

Hearing Title: "Breach of Trust: Surveillance in Private Spaces"
Date: May 20, 2025
Room 2247, Rayburn House Office Building

Submitted by:
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Chairwoman Mace, Ranking Member Brown, and Members of the Subcommittee:

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before this committee to discuss a growing concern in our increasingly connected society—covert surveillance in private and temporary spaces. My name is Joseph LaSorsa, and I have spent the past 15 years in the field of personal protection, security consulting, technical surveillance countermeasures (TSCM), and privacy protection, supporting both corporate and individual clients across the United States and abroad.

Today, I am here to speak about the ease with which covert surveillance can be conducted using commercially available technology, and how this capability threatens the expectation of privacy in short-term and temporary rentals such as Airbnbs, VRBOs, and even hotel rooms.

The Rise of Inexpensive and Accessible Surveillance Technology

Technical surveillance is nothing new - first instances of which occurred as far back as the civil war when Abraham Lincoln's telegram lines were tapped. However, modern surveillance technology has become increasingly accessible, inexpensive, and no longer the domain of governments or corporate espionage. Small, high-definition cameras and audio recorders can be purchased online for less than \$100. These devices are mass-produced, often marketed as tools for legitimate purposes—such as home security or child monitoring—but require no verification of how or where they are utilized. This accessibility creates an environment where any individual, regardless of intent, can obtain and deploy highly effective surveillance equipment with minimal effort or technical skill.

As someone who routinely performs technical surveillance counter-measures inspections, or bug sweeps, of offices, residences, and short-term rentals, I can confirm that hidden cameras disguised as smoke detectors, alarm clocks, air purifiers, or even power adapters are commonly found in places where individuals have a reasonable expectation of privacy.

The Misalignment of Laws and Privacy Expectations

Currently, U.S. laws regulating the manufacture, sale, and use of surveillance devices are outdated and insufficient. They presume lawful intent and typically do not restrict possession. In many states, the legality of surveillance is tied to *consent*, but that consent is often ambiguous in the context of a short-term rental where the renter is unaware of being monitored. This legal loophole creates a fundamental misalignment between the letter of the law and the reasonable expectation of privacy.

Homeowners would never be expected to tolerate surveillance within the privacy of their own homes. Similarly, individuals who temporarily rent a space—whether for a weekend stay or during travel—should be granted the same reasonable expectation of privacy. During such occupancy, that space effectively becomes their private residence. While some laws prohibit surveillance in inherently private areas such as bedrooms, bathrooms, and closets, the allowance of covert monitoring in so-called "common areas" like living rooms and kitchens—often without the renter's knowledge or consent—undermines personal dignity, autonomy, and legal protections. This issue is not hypothetical; multiple documented cases have revealed hidden surveillance devices in private rental properties.

Recommendation: Protect Privacy in Temporary Spaces

To help restore and reinforce the public's trust in the use of temporary spaces, I respectfully recommend the Committee to consider the following:

- **Establish a Federal Privacy Expectation Standard** for short-term rentals, mirroring the protections afforded to long-term tenants and hotel guests.
- **Require Full Disclosure of Any Surveillance Devices** in any rented property—regardless of where they are placed—and require signed, informed consent from renters.
- **Ban the Use of Surveillance Devices in Bedrooms and Bathrooms** of any rental or temporary living space, including common areas where sleeping or personal activities may occur.
- **Clarify Penalties for Covert Surveillance** of individuals in temporary dwellings without clear and voluntary consent.

Conclusion

Privacy is a foundational right, and its erosion in temporary living spaces threatens not only individual freedoms but also the integrity of platforms and industries which depend on public trust. Efforts must be made to close the legal and technological gap which has allowed covert surveillance to flourish unchecked in short-term rentals. Thank you for the opportunity to share these insights. I look forward to answering your questions and supporting the Subcommittee's work on this issue.

Respectfully submitted,



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