

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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New Partnership is Taking Steps to Prevent Human Trafficking in Maryland Hotels

Annapolis, MD (July 17, 2019) – The **Maryland Hotel Lodging Association** ([MHLA](#)) today announced a new partnership with the Seattle-based nonprofit, **Businesses Ending Slavery and Trafficking** ([BEST](#)) to make human trafficking awareness training available to all MHLA’s hotel members and their staffs, free of charge. BEST provides expertise in human trafficking prevention, and BEST’s *Inhospitable to Human Trafficking* training, sponsored by [AAHOA](#), helps hotel employees learn the indicators of human trafficking and how to safely report it to law enforcement. By partnering with BEST to offer this valuable training, the MHLA is helping their member hotels learn how to avert human trafficking at their properties.

Maryland’s unique location contributes to making it a central location for human trafficking. Traffickers use Maryland’s highways, especially Interstate-95, to transport victims to major East Coast cities such as New York, Baltimore, Philadelphia, and Washington, D.C. Interstate-95 runs through some of the state’s most populated cities, making this highway a major corridor for human trafficking activity, according to the Maryland Human Trafficking Task Force.

Human trafficking networks often rely on legitimate businesses, such as hotels, to sustain their operations and infrastructure. Given the transient nature of the hotel industry, with its service-focused culture that respects guest privacy, hotels can be an appealing environment for human traffickers. Therefore, it is essential that hotel employees are trained in what to look for.

“Try to imagine having your freedom taken away, continuously living with the fear of violence, and being forced to work against your will. These are things that human trafficking victims often experience,” explains Mar Brettmann, PhD, Executive Director for BEST. “Our human trafficking awareness training helps hotel employees learn how to spot the warning signs when a guest is being trafficked, and to know how to safely report it.”

BEST’s *Inhospitable to Human Trafficking* training for hotel employees is a 30-minute, online, video-based training. The training is available in English or Spanish, and it has been proven to increase hotel employee reporting. Researchers from the University of Washington evaluated BEST’s hotel training and

found trained employees were more likely to come forward to report human trafficking incidents to their managers. Researchers also learned 96 percent of hotel employee participants believe the training made their hotel safer.

This new partnership will give more hotel and motel owners and managers across Maryland the opportunity to implement BEST's valuable anti-trafficking training at no cost to MHLA's members. MHLA is the most recent hotel association to adopt BEST's human trafficking prevention training, joining a growing list of large hotel associations utilizing the program, including; the Asian American Hotel Owners Association (AAHOA), Texas Hotel and Lodging Association (THLA), California Hotel and Lodging Association (CHLA), Washington Hospitality Association, North Carolina Restaurant and Lodging Association (NCRLA), Hotel Association of New York City (HANYC), and the Pennsylvania Restaurant and Lodging Association (PRLA).

"We are proud to partner with BEST on this very important issue," said Amy Rohrer, President & CEO of MHLA. "BEST's *Inhospitable to Human Trafficking* training is an informative and practical resource for hoteliers and their staff. This training will provide the Maryland lodging industry with the education necessary to help protect victims of exploitation and increase employee safety."

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About Businesses Ending Slavery and Trafficking (BEST)

Businesses Ending Slavery and Trafficking (BEST) is a Seattle-based nonprofit organization with the mission to align and equip leaders to use the power of business to prevent human trafficking. BEST is the first organization in the country dedicated entirely to working with businesses to disrupt human trafficking. BEST has provided consultation and training to hundreds of businesses on how to prevent human trafficking. For more information visit www.bestalliance.org.

About Maryland Hotel Lodging Association (MHLA)

The Maryland Hotel Lodging Association (MHLA) is a trade-based membership organization representing Maryland's \$6 Billion lodging industry with more than 78,000 rooms in 700 hotels across the state. The Association provides advocacy, information, recognition, and networking opportunities that benefit lodging industry owners, managers, associates, related businesses, and communities in Maryland. For more information visit www.mdlodging.org.