



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## New Partnership is Making Human Trafficking Prevention Training Assessable to More Oklahoma Hotels

OKLAHOMA CITY, Okla., March 2, 2020 – The **Oklahoma Hotel & Lodging Association** ([OH&LA](#)) today announced a new partnership with the Seattle-based nonprofit, **Businesses Ending Slavery and Trafficking** ([BEST](#)). This partnership will make BEST's *Inhospitable to Human Trafficking* training, sponsored by [AAHOA](#), available at no cost to OH&LA's members so that more lodging facilities across Oklahoma can train their staff in human trafficking prevention.

BEST provides expertise in human trafficking prevention, and since 2012, BEST has been providing *Inhospitable to Human Trafficking* training to help hotel employees learn the warning signs of human trafficking in hotels, and how to safely report it. By partnering with BEST to offer this valuable training, OH&LA is striving to reduce the crime of human trafficking and helping keep Oklahoma lodging facilities safe.

Traffickers often rely on legitimate businesses, like hotels, to sustain their operations and infrastructure. Given the transient nature of the hotel industry, with its service-focused culture and respect for guest privacy, hotels are often an environment trafficker will use to force their victims to meet buyers. Therefore, it is essential that hotel employees are trained in what to look for, so they can recognize and report potential human trafficking situations. This is important because hotel staff are often in direct contact with guests throughout their stay, and they work in roles where they may encounter human trafficking victims.

"It's extremely important for hotels to invest the time it takes to train their staff in human trafficking awareness so that employees know how to recognize the warning signs and they can bring potential trafficking incidents to the attention of their managers," says Mar Brettmann, CEO for BEST. "Our training clearly explains what to watch for in hotels, and it has been proven to increase the reporting of human trafficking."

*Inhospitable to Human Trafficking* training for hotel employees is a 30-minute, video-based training. The training is available in English or Spanish, and hotel staff can take the training as a large group, or individual employees can take the training online. Researchers from the University of Washington evaluated BEST's hotel training and found that trained employees were more likely to come forward to report human trafficking incidents to their managers. Researchers also learned that 96 percent of hotel employee participants believe that BEST's training made their hotel safer.

As of today, more than 200 lodging facilities who are members of OH&LA will be able to access *Inhospitable to Human Trafficking* training for free through the OH&LA member website. This new partnership will strengthen the safety of Oklahoma's hospitality industry, and it will help combat the crime of human trafficking in Oklahoma communities. OH&LA is the 11<sup>th</sup> state hotel association to begin using BEST's training.

"OH&LA is thrilled to offer BEST's prevention training to its member properties so Oklahoma's lodging community can help support the fight to end human trafficking, and ensure hotel employees have a better understanding of ways to identify traffickers and potential victims," says Patti Colley, Chief Strategy Officer for OH&LA.

"BEST's *Inhospitable to Human Trafficking* training sponsored by AAHOA is a vital tool in the fight against trafficking. Hoteliers and their employees can be the first line of defense against trafficking in their communities, but only if they know how to identify and respond to potential situations of human trafficking. Our friends at OH&LA are taking a critical step in this fight by offering this training to their members. It can help hoteliers protect their guests, their employees, and their businesses, and potentially save lives," said AAHOA President & CEO, Cecil P. Staton.

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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 [bestalliance.org](http://bestalliance.org).

#### **About the Oklahoma Hotel & Lodging Association (OH&LA)**

Incorporated in 1974, the Oklahoma Hotel & Lodging Association (OH&LA) is Oklahoma's trade association for the hotel and lodging industry representing \$7 billion in state business sales, more than \$7 billion in guest spending, and \$2 billion in hotel industry wages and salaries. The OH&LA actively provides advocacy, education, and resources for operators and professionals in all types of lodging businesses throughout the state of Oklahoma. The OH&LA is the exclusive state partner association of the American Hotel & Lodging Association (AH&LA), and the voice of the \$483 billion lodging industry, employing more than 8 million American jobs. For more information visit [oklahomahotels.org](http://oklahomahotels.org).