



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

New Partnership is Taking Steps to Prevent Human Trafficking in South Carolina Hotels

The South Carolina Restaurant and Lodging Association's newest partnership launched December 3

Columbia, SC (December 10, 2019) – The South Carolina Restaurant and Lodging Association ([SCRLA](#)) has announced a new partnership with the Seattle-based nonprofit, Businesses Ending Slavery and Trafficking ([BEST](#)) to make human trafficking awareness training available to all SCRLA members and their employees, free of charge. BEST provides expertise in human trafficking prevention, and BEST's *Inhospitable to Human Trafficking* training, sponsored by Asian American Hotel Owners Association ([AAHOA](#)), helps hotel and restaurant 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 SCRLA is helping their members learn how to combat human trafficking.

South Carolina's unique location contributes to making it a central location for human trafficking, specifically in tourist areas. Richland County is ranks number one for human trafficking cases, followed by Horry, Greenville, Charleston and Beaufort Counties. Traffickers tend to prey on victims who exhibit vulnerabilities, including foster children, runaways, people who have experienced prior abuse, individuals with low socioeconomic status, undocumented immigrants, individuals with little education, and individuals looking for opportunities for a better life.

"The SCRLA is extremely pleased to forge this partnership with a nationally recognized nonprofit organization to further strengthen the fight against human trafficking in our state," said John Durst, SCRLA's President and CEO. "Coupled with the partnership we recently formed with the South Carolina Attorney General's Human Trafficking Task Force, we are well-positioned—along with state agencies, nonprofit leaders, community advocates and other key stakeholders—to strategically and effectively combat human trafficking, promoting ongoing coordination and information-sharing between foodservice and lodging businesses, law enforcement agencies, and service providers throughout South Carolina."

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

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 hotel owners and managers across South Carolina the opportunity to implement BEST's valuable anti-trafficking training at no cost to SCRLA members. SCRLA is the most recent association to adopt BEST's human trafficking prevention training, joining numerous organizations across the country currently utilizing the program.

"We are pleased to partner with SCRLA to provide this valuable training to their member hotels and their staff," said Mar Brettmann, PhD, BEST's Executive Director. "Hotels can play a critical role in assisting victims by ensuring all employees are trained to identify possible human trafficking situations. Our training helps hotel employees know what to watch for and prepares them to be able to take immediate action to report it."

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About the South Carolina Restaurant and Lodging Association

In its 75th year, the SCRLA's mission is to promote, protect and educate the foodservice and lodging industries of our state and to ensure positive business growth for our members. The SCRLA strives to represent the best interests of its members on small business issues, hospitality and tourism concerns and towards the protection of South Carolina's quality of life. For more information visit scrla.org.

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.

MEDIA CONTACT FOR SCRLA

Lenza Jolley
803-765-9000 x. 12
Lenza@scrla.org

MEDIA CONTACT FOR BEST

Katie Amodei
425-787-5128
katie@bestalliance.org