

Dear Members of the Economic Matters Committee,

My name is Priti Patel and I am the owner of the Holiday Inn Express in Annapolis, Maryland. I am also an ambassador for the Asian American Hotel Owners Association (AAHOA) representing 212 hotel owners in Maryland. I strongly oppose HB-581. This bill will be detrimental to our industry which already operates on thin margins. My hotel, is a family business and we have been hit hard during this pandemic. Since last March, we have had to alter the way we run our hotel and endure the financial strains that ensued. Even though hotel guests were hardly walking through our doors, we have gone above and beyond the CDC guidelines to keep our guests and employees safe. Even with minimal revenue coming in, we took the extra steps to install UVC light filters, purchase electrostatic sprayers, install plexiglass dividers, update signage, provide masks and other PPE. We made our employees and guests our first priority.

We have to had to spend long hours negotiating for financial leniency with our franchisor, bank, mortgage company, vendors, utility companies and others just to barely keep the lights on. The hardest part was figuring out who we could still keep employed and who to let go in such a precarious time. I question every day how can I tell my son who is a Hospitality Major and graduating next year, that there may not be a family business for him to come run?

The lifeline extended to our industry by the federal government is what has allowed us to survive up until now. However, we know that it won't last forever and we will find ourselves in deep waters again. Our industry will be one of the last to recover...2023 is the projection now. Numerous Maryland hotels have offered rooms for first responders, and worked with their local communities to house the homeless during the pandemic so they had a place to go and feel safe. This bill will essentially penalize good deeds and will just kick us while we're down.

Maryland hoteliers are facing historic economic challenges and if this bill goes through the state itself will also suffer. According to the American Lodging Association, pre-COVID, the Maryland Hotel Industry supported 52,644 jobs, paid an estimated \$2 billion in wages and salaries and paid an estimated \$602 million in state and local taxes. The loss of this revenue to the state will also have a trickledown effect on numerous related industries. HB-581 will force businesses to stop hiring, reduce their workforce or worse, shut their doors.

We simply cannot be forced to meet additional financial cost increases. HB-581 will derail any hopes of Maryland hoteliers recovering their losses and will deflate the livelihood of so many. Let there be a business for future families to run.

Thank you for your time.

Priti Patel, Owner  
Holiday Inn Express  
Annapolis, MD