

MHLA

Maryland Hotel Lodging Association

HB 338 - Support with Amendments

Business Regulation-Innkeepers-Records and Human Trafficking Awareness Training

The hotel industry has long recognized the critical role it plays in ending the scourge of human trafficking, and employee training among other techniques play an instrumental role in identifying, reporting and stopping this horrific crime at our hotels. The American Hotel & Lodging Association (AH&LA) has led industry efforts nationally with the “No Room for Trafficking” campaign that includes the goal of training every hotel employee. High quality training programs, developed with input from NGOs such as Polaris, ECPAT, BEST, and industry representatives, are available through hotel trade associations. In fact, the MHLA has partnered with BEST to provide such training at no cost to member hotel employees. Major hotel brands not only offer similar training but also mandate its completion by employees.

When this bill was introduced last year, we discussed the opportunity for amendments with Delegate Ebersole. If the following are accepted, this bill would align human trafficking training requirements for Maryland’s lodging industry with national initiatives already implemented voluntarily by multitudes of hotels across the state.

1. In section 15-209 (B) (1), line 16, delete “AN” and in line 17 delete “PROGRAM AND A REFRESHER TRAINING PROGRAM” and insert “PROGRAMS”;
2. In section 15-209 (B) (2), add language to more clearly define components of training that may meet the requirements of this bill, to include:
 - a. The definition of human trafficking and commercial exploitation of children;
 - b. Differences between labor and sex trafficking, specific to the hotel sector;
 - c. Guidance on the role of hospitality employees in reporting and responding to this issue.
3. In section 15-209 (C) (1), line 26, delete “ENSURE THAT” and insert “PROVIDE” and in line 27 delete “RECEIVE” and insert “WITH”;
4. A requirement to post human trafficking awareness signage in a location conspicuous to employees;
5. A requirement for hotels to establish procedures for reporting suspected human trafficking activity and implement a human trafficking prevention policy that applies to all employees;
6. Allowance of 45 days for new hire employees to receive training.

Lastly, we believe the bill should apply to ALL lodging establishments, including short-term residential lodging. Human trafficking is not limited to traditional hotels and increased awareness across the entire industry would prove beneficial to efforts to eradicate human trafficking from all lodging establishments.

Thank you for your consideration.

Amy Rohrer, President & CEO