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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Solution to prevent human trafficking is now free for Washington hospitality businesses

OLYMPIA, WASH. (Jan. 15, 2019) – A powerful solution to end human trafficking is proving to be effective inside Washington state hotels – when staff members are trained in what to look for.

The Washington Hospitality Association Education Foundation is partnering with the nonprofit Businesses Ending Slavery & Trafficking (BEST) to increase access to human trafficking awareness training for the state’s hotel employees.

Starting this month, which is National Slavery and Human Trafficking Prevention Month, BEST’s training will be offered to the 6,500 Washington Hospitality Association members and their teams free of charge.

Both the association and BEST participate in the Washington State Task Force Against the Trafficking of Persons, and both organizations have been instrumental in positioning Washington state as a national leader in human trafficking prevention.

Human trafficking networks rely on legitimate businesses, like hotels, to sustain their operations and infrastructure. BEST reports employees who have frequent contact with hotel guests are in a unique position to spot the warning signs of human trafficking when they are trained in what to look for.

“We are woven into the fabric of the daily lives of our guests and team members,” said Anthony Anton, president and CEO of the Washington Hospitality Association. “As a result, hospitality industry leaders are recognizing the important role we play in preventing and ending this crime. Hotels take profound pride and responsibility in serving and protecting all guests.”

American youth are being exploited by human trafficking, said Mar Brettmann, PhD, executive director for BEST. The typical age of entry for youth into the sex trade is 13-15 years old, and many trafficking victims are runaway teens or survivors of other forms of abuse.

“When hotel employees are trained to recognize and report potential human trafficking situations, it can make all the difference in the life of someone who is being trafficked,” Brettmann said. “For this reason, BEST is thrilled to announce our new partnership with the Washington Hospitality Association. This partnership will allow us to train thousands of hotel employees in Washington, and it will make our region even more proactive in preventing human trafficking.”

BEST's program is a 30-minute training that can be taken by individual hotel employees or in a larger group setting. The training is available in English or Spanish, and it has been proven to increase hotel employee reporting.

To learn more or participate in training, visit: wahospitality.org/best/.

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About the Washington Hospitality Association

Hospitality is the industry that serves. The Washington Hospitality Association delivers wins for the largest group of private employers in the state, and the 286,000 jobs the industry provides are the backbone of our state's economy. The association works at the state and local levels to find proactive solutions to the challenging issues facing the industry and its workforce. It provides its members with programs, services and information they need to deliver great local experiences, ensure the success of their employees and help their communities thrive. The Washington Hospitality Association became one of the state's largest trade associations in 2016 when the Washington Restaurant Association and Washington Lodging Association joined forces in a combined association.

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, and they have trained thousands of hotel employees in how to protect their hotel from human trafficking. For more information visit: www.bestalliance.org.