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## United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION,  
LABOR, AND PENSIONS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6300

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<http://help.senate.gov>

February 7, 2018

Ms. Katherine Lugar  
President and Chief Executive Officer  
American Hotel and Lodging Association  
1250 I Street NW, Suite 1100  
Washington DC, 20005

Dear President Lugar:

I write to your association with deep concern regarding harassment in the workplace. In recent months, stories of sexual harassment have dominated the headlines and sparked a national conversation about change, power dynamics, and equality in the workplace and beyond. Workers across the country are speaking out about their experiences, and their stories have made clear that we all have a great deal of work to do to address this pervasive, systemic, and longstanding issue. Although we are seeing headlines about powerful and famous people being called to account for their actions, we are seeing far less action in industries outside of the spotlight. Therefore, I hope and expect that you are taking steps to address concerns about misconduct in your industry and to ensure your members' workplaces are free from harassment.

The accommodation and food services industry employs nearly 11 million workers and has some of the highest rates of reported sexual harassment in the country.<sup>1</sup> According to data collected by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission ("EEOC") from 2005 to 2015, the accommodation and food services industry accounted for the greatest portion of sexual harassment claims filed.<sup>2</sup> Disturbingly, a survey of 500 hotel and casino housekeepers and servers found that 58 percent of hotel workers and 77 percent of casino workers had faced some form of sexual harassment by a guest.<sup>3</sup> Over half of the hotel workers who had reported harassment said they did not feel safe after the incident of harassment.<sup>4</sup>

As shocking as these numbers are, they likely underestimate the rate of sexual harassment. The EEOC estimates that 85 percent of all workers who are subjected to harassment never file a formal legal charge, and 70 percent of all workers never file a complaint internally.<sup>5</sup> It has long been clear that the magnitude

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<sup>1</sup> *Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey*, Bureau of Labor Statistics (January 2018), <https://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat18.htm>.

<sup>2</sup> Jocelyn Frye, *Not Just the Rich and Famous: The Pervasiveness of Sexual Harassment across Industries Affects All Workers*, Center for American Progress (November 2017), <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/women/news/2017/11/20/443139/not-just-rich-famous/>.

<sup>3</sup> *Hands Off Pants On: Sexual Harassment in Chicago's Hospitality Industry*, Unite Here Local 14 (July 2016), <https://www.handsoffpantson.org/wp-content/uploads/HandsOffReportWeb.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> *Hands Off Pants On: Sexual Harassment in Chicago's Hospitality Industry* at 6.

<sup>5</sup> Chai R. Feldblum & Victoria A. Lipnic, *Select Task Force on the Study of Harassment in the Workplace: Report of the Co-Chairs*, U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission 16 (June 2016), [https://www.eeoc.gov/eeoc/task\\_force/harassment/upload/report.pdf](https://www.eeoc.gov/eeoc/task_force/harassment/upload/report.pdf).

of the problem in your industry should not be ignored, and I am hoping that the recent focus on this issue will provide the needed push to make real progress.

As the Ranking Member of the U.S. Senate Committee with jurisdiction over issues of workplace harassment, I am extremely concerned about this issue and am seeking an update on efforts to prevent and address harassment in workplaces across the country.

As part of that effort, I am interested in the ongoing discussions, plans, and actions within the American Hotel and Lodging Association ("AHLA") aimed at protecting employees and establishing an equal and harassment-free workplace. I request a briefing with my staff within the next three weeks to discuss any recent efforts you have undertaken to assess and address workplace harassment in your industry.

I also request the following information:

1. Any polling, surveys, or research the AHLA has conducted in order to understand the scope of the problem within the industry;
2. Any research or actions the AHLA has undertaken to assess and address risk factors specific to the industry;
3. Any surveys the AHLA has conducted to solicit feedback from employees about how to best address harassment in the industry and the results of the surveys;
4. Any steps the AHLA has taken to ensure its associated employers are fully and properly educating their employees about workplace harassment policies and rights;
5. Any best practices the AHLA has identified among its associated employers to accurately assess and address workplace harassment; and
6. Any suggestions you may have about how to strengthen and improve legal protections and processes in the workplace.

Studies have shown that workplaces that tolerate harassment have more of it, while workplaces that intentionally act to address issues of harassment have less of it.<sup>6</sup> Employers and employees in your industry are undoubtedly looking to you for leadership in how to tackle this persistent problem with the urgency it requires. I appreciate you taking this matter seriously, and I look forward to our continued discussions. If you have any questions regarding this letter please contact Carly Rush or Joe Shantz at 202-224-0767 with my Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee Staff.

Sincerely,



Patty Murray  
United States Senator  
Ranking Member, Senate Committee on  
Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

cc: Lamar Alexander, United States Senator,  
Chairman, Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

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<sup>6</sup> Feldblum & Lipnic at 32.