



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 21, 2024

MEDIA CONTACT

Jason Brandt
503-302-5060
jbrandt@oregonrla.org

MEDIA CONTACT

Katie Amodei
425-280-3347
katie@bestalliance.org

Restaurants and Lodging Facilities Across Oregon Get a New Tool to Help Stop Human Trafficking

Wilsonville, OR—The Oregon Restaurant & Lodging Association ([ORLA](#)) today announced a new partnership with the nonprofit, Businesses Ending Slavery and Trafficking ([BEST](#)) to make human trafficking awareness training available to all ORLA members and their staffs, free of charge. BEST provides specialized training in human trafficking prevention, and BEST's [Inhospitable to Human Trafficking](#) training for the hospitality industry will now be available to help restaurant and lodging employees across Oregon learn the indicators of human trafficking and how to safely report it. This new partnership is giving the hospitality industry in Oregon a new tool that has been proven to prepare employees to be able to recognize human trafficking situations and assist in recovering more victims.

"ORLA needs to be a leader in forging stronger working relationships with like minded organizations focused on anti-trafficking training," said Jason Brandt, President & CEO for the Oregon Restaurant & Lodging Association. "Our industry is a part of the solution and needs to be at the table in providing quality training at no cost as a foundational societal responsibility."

Human trafficking networks rely on legitimate businesses to sustain their operations and infrastructure, and hospitality businesses are often an ideal environment for human traffickers because they provide a public place of business where traffickers can connect victims with buyers and other exploiters. In 2021 the National Human Trafficking Hotline was contacted 485 times to report suspected human trafficking incidents in Oregon. The intention of this new partnership is to have even more human trafficking cases identified and reported across the state by educating public facing hospitality employees to be able to recognize and report the behaviors that are the indicators of human trafficking.

Oregon is home to several port authorities and interstate freeways, and this makes the state a prime location for human trafficking activity. In a recent national FBI-led anti-trafficking operation that was conducted in the summer of 2023, Oregon was one of the states where traffickers were identified and arrested in a sting operation that led to the identification or arrest of a total of 126 suspects and to the recovery of 59 victims of child sex trafficking.

“There is no easy fix to the complex problem of human trafficking, but combatting this crime starts with having good training,” says Kirsten Foot, CEO & Executive Director for Businesses Ending Slavery and Trafficking. “That’s why our new partnership with ORLA is so important. They are making our human trafficking awareness training easily available to their members, and we know that educating public facing employees about the warning signs of human trafficking can help more witnesses know when to report human trafficking behaviors.”

BEST’s [*Inhospitable to Human Trafficking*](#) training is a 30-minute, online, video-based training. The training is available in English or Spanish, and it has been proven to increase hospitality 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 that 97 percent of hospitality employee participants believe BEST’s training made their workplace safer.

###

About Oregon Restaurant & Lodging Association (ORLA)

The Oregon Restaurant & Lodging Association is the leading business association for the foodservice and lodging industry in Oregon, which is comprised of over 10,220 foodservice locations and 2,000 lodging establishments. As of December 2023, the Oregon Employment Department reports the Leisure and Hospitality workforce totals 208,700 with a total economic impact of over \$13.8 billion in annual sales for Oregon. For more information, visit www.oregonrla.org.

About Businesses Ending Slavery and Trafficking (BEST)

Businesses Ending Slavery and Trafficking (BEST) is a Seattle-based nonprofit organization with the mission to educate employers to prevent human trafficking and create pathways to employment for survivors. BEST is the first organization in the country dedicated entirely to working with employers to disrupt human trafficking. BEST has provided consultation and training to hundreds of businesses on how to prevent human trafficking. For more information visit www.bestalliance.org.