

February 26, 2021

The Honorable Phillipe Cunningham, Chair
The Honorable Steve Fletcher, Vice-Chair
Public Health & Safety Committee
Minneapolis City Council
350 S. Fifth Street
Minneapolis, MN 55415

Dear Chair Cunningham and Vice-Chair Fletcher:

As the Minnesota hotel industry's principal representatives at the Minneapolis- and state-levels, and the Minneapolis Regional Chamber, together we write to express opposition to the *Hospitality Worker Right to Recall Ordinance (2021-00108)*.¹ While our associations appreciate the legislation's intent—to get hospitality workers back to work and to provide greater job certainty for these individuals—we strongly believe the prescriptive approach presented will prove counterproductive for employees and businesses alike. For these same reasons, similar legislation was recently vetoed by California's Governor.

At current, the fundamental priority of this industry is—and must be—to survive the COVID-19 pandemic's fallout. Minneapolis' hotel business is reeling, with current occupancy levels at a catastrophic 14% percent. Compounding this devastating state of affairs is an exodus of meetings and events business from the City, with many group contacts informing hoteliers they do not feel confident booking near-term or even far-off events without greater certainties from Minnesota's reopening strategy. According to a survey by the Minneapolis Federal Reserve Bank, Explore Minnesota Tourism and Hospitality Minnesota, as many as 60% of Minnesota's hotels may face insolvency by this summer if conditions do not change. Despite our advocacy efforts to pass financial relief legislation, most Minneapolis hotels did not receive aid from Hennepin County, nor have they received aid from the city. Experts anticipate economic recovery will take several years, making COVID-19 the most serious calamity the hotel industry has ever faced.

Amidst these extraordinary challenges, our associations and members have been strong advocates for employee assistance programs, including expanded and accelerated unemployment benefits, federal Paycheck Protection Program funding (a majority of which typically goes to workers), housing and food insecurity protections and other critical lifelines. Many hoteliers have also covered extended healthcare costs, tackled food insecurity head-on from their kitchens and much more to aid employees wherever circumstances allow.

Through programs like AHLA's *SafeStay*,² our industry worked from the pandemic's outset to develop elevated employee- (and guest-) minded cleanliness and disinfection standards—based on guidance and consultation with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Occupational Safety and Health

¹ <https://lms.minneapolismn.gov/File/2021-00108>.

² <https://www.ahla.com/safestay>.

Administration and other experts—to meet the health challenges and expectations newly presented by COVID-19. Through *Safe Stay*, as well as hotel-specific programs that have built further upon its practices, the hotel industry has put the safety of our most precious resource first: the people who work in our hotels and directly convey our hospitality mantra to guests. In addition, as early as March 2020, our industry began working collaboratively with the State to develop Minnesota-specific safety and sanitation protocols to protect guests and workers. This industry has truly gone above and beyond to protect Minnesotans during the pandemic crisis.

The aforementioned is just a snapshot of the care our industry has shown for its employees in these unprecedented times. But for our employees to get back to work as quickly and efficiently as possible, hotels must first outlast the current economic crisis, which will require financial and operational flexibility. Yet the *Hospitality Worker Right to Recall Ordinance* would dictate rigid mandates to businesses, making recovery more difficult and in turn potentially slowing the rate of reemployment.

As events and travel do begin returning to Minneapolis, hotel operators will be highly motivated to bring back employees who are ready to return to work and are already well-trained for their roles. But hoteliers must have flexibility in this space in order for an efficient recovery to occur for employer, employee and guest. Unfortunately, the *Ordinance* at-hand would needlessly hinder important recovery efforts for all parties.

Thank you for your consideration of our position. We look forward to further dialogue with you on this important matter.

Sincerely,



Greater Minneapolis Hotel Association



CC: Mayor Jacob Frey
Minneapolis City Council