

**COUNTY OF SACRAMENTO  
CALIFORNIA**

For the Agenda of:  
February 6, 2018  
2:15 P.M.

To: Board of Supervisors

From: Office of Planning and Environmental Review

Subject: The Sacramento County Hotel Worker Protection Act of 2018. Introduce An Ordinance Adding Chapter 4.75, Title 4 To The Sacramento County Code Requiring Hotel Employees Assigned To Work In Guest Rooms To Be Equipped With Portable Emergency Panic Button or Notification Device; Waive Full Reading And Continue To February 27, 2018, For Adoption.

Supervisory  
District(s): All

Contact: Surinder Singh, Principal Planner, (916) 874-5462

**Overview**

The proposed Ordinance requires Sacramento County hotel and motels operators to provide employees with a panic button or notification device which can be used to call for help if the employee reasonably believes that there is sexual harassment activity occurring in the employee's presence. The panic button or notification device should be provided to each employee at no cost and is designed to be used in emergency situations to summon hotel security or other appropriate hotel staff to the employee's location. The Ordinance also requires the subject hotel or motel to develop, maintain and comply with a written sexual harassment policy. There are 32 hotels and motels subject to licensure in the unincorporated area of Sacramento County. As drafted, this Ordinance, applies to hotels or motels with 25 or more rooms which currently is estimated at 24 or approximately seventy-five percent of the County's existing licensed hotels and motels.

**Recommendation**

Introduce the Sacramento County Hotel Worker Protection Act of 2018 Ordinance adding Chapter 4.75, to Title 4 of the Sacramento County Code Requiring Hotel Employee Panic Buttons and Hotel Guest Sexual Harassment Policies; waive full reading and continue to February 27, 2018 for adoption.

**Measures/Evaluation**

The Hotel Worker Protection Act Ordinance will safeguard Sacramento County hotel and motel employees by providing them with panic button or other notification device that can be used to deter unwanted sexual harassment.

**Fiscal Impact**

There are some small staffing costs associated with preparation of this Ordinance; and there may be future staffing costs associated with the outreach campaign, including time for site visits and enforcement.

The Sacramento County Hotel Worker Protection Act of 2018. Introduce An Ordinance Adding Chapter 4.75, Title 4 To The Sacramento County Code Requiring Hotel Employees Assigned To Work In Guest Rooms To Be Equipped With Portable Emergency Panic Button or Notification Device; Waive Full Reading And Continue To February 27, 2018, For Adoption

## **BACKGROUND**

To address worker protections against sexual harassment, some hotel operators around the country are providing their housekeepers with panic buttons that they can use if they feel there is sexual harassment activity occurring in their presence. Panic buttons, when pressed, alert security personnel or other appropriate hotel staff to intervene if an employee feels threatened by any person.

Housekeepers in unionized, New York City hotels have been carrying panic buttons since 2013 and the Chicago City Council unanimously voted to require similar devices in 2017. Voters in Seattle approved legislation in 2016 which requires hotel housekeepers to carry electronic whistles, GPS-equipped buttons that alert security, or iPads with new emergency alert functions. The City of Miami Beach in Florida is also considering new panic button laws aimed at protecting its 11,500 housekeepers from harassment or improper advances by hotel guests. The City of Long Beach, California, narrowly rejected a proposal that addressed various hotel worker issues including but not limited to panic buttons in a 5-4 vote late last year.

AB 1761 was introduced on January 4, 2018 by Assemblymember Al Muratsuchi, D-Torrance and Bill Quirk, D-Hayward, that would require hotels in California to provide housekeepers with a panic button which will pre-empt local ordinances (Attachment 1). If approved, it would make California the first state in the nation to have a state-wide law requiring hotels to provide employees working alone in guest rooms with a panic button.

## **DISCUSSION**

There are 32 hotels and motels subject to licensure in the unincorporated area of Sacramento County. This Ordinance applies to hotels or motels with 25 or more rooms which would apply to 24 of the County's hotels and motels. The proposed Ordinance would require Sacramento County hotel and motels operators to provide housekeepers with a panic button or notification device which can be used to call for help if the employee reasonably believes that there is sexual harassment activity occurring in the employee's presence. The Ordinance does not require hotel and motel operators to use a specific type of device, as long as it can be used quickly and easily to create a noise loud enough to alert others to the employee's location. Representatives from the California Hotel and Lodging Association informed staff that existing safeguards are in place and they don't believe that additional measures are warranted.

### **Outreach**

Following adoption of the proposed Ordinance, staff will develop an informational flyer to post on the County's website about the new regulations. Additionally, staff will mail the flyer to hospitality businesses in the unincorporated County to inform them of the regulations.

### **Environmental Evaluation**

The Ordinance is not subject to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15060(c)(3), because the Ordinance does not meet the definition of a project as defined in Section 15378.

The Sacramento County Hotel Worker Protection Act of 2018. Introduce An Ordinance Adding Chapter 4.75, Title 4 To The Sacramento County Code Requiring Hotel Employees Assigned To Work In Guest Rooms To Be Equipped With Portable Emergency Panic Button or Notification Device; Waive Full Reading And Continue To February 27, 2018, For Adoption

**MEASURES/EVALUATION**

The Hotel Worker Protection Act Ordinance will safeguard Sacramento County hotel and motel employees by providing them with panic button or other notification device that can be used to deter unwanted sexual harassment.

**FISCAL IMPACT**

There are some small staffing costs associated with preparation of an Ordinance to require hotel and motel employees to be equipped with panic buttons; however, there may be future staffing costs associated with the outreach campaign, including time for site visits and enforcement.

Respectfully submitted,

APPROVAL RECOMMENDED:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Leighann Moffitt, Planning Director  
Office of Planning and Environmental Review

\_\_\_\_\_  
NAVDEEP S. GILL  
County Executive

Attachments

ORD – Hotel Worker Protection Act  
ATT 1 – AB 1761