

Hotel Employers, Foundation Rally To Support Employees Despite Industry on Brink Of Collapse

Since the World Health Organization announced the Coronavirus as a public health emergency, it has been catastrophic for the hotel and lodging industry and the employees it supports as travel comes to a virtual halt.

The leisure and hospitality sector lost nearly 7.7 million jobs in April alone, accounting for more job losses than construction, manufacturing, retail, education, and health services combined.

A recent survey of the American Hotel & Lodging Association's members found:

- **76%:** Hotel employees furloughed or laid off.
- **21%:** Current average staffing level at hotel properties.
- **37%:** Hotels that have been able to rehire any staff through economic relief measures such as the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP).
- **52%:** Hotels say they do not expect their staffing levels to return to pre-COVID levels until at least the end of 2020, if not longer.

Despite this difficult time, the hotel industry is committed to investing in the men and women — **8.3 million in total and supporting one in 25 American jobs** — who are the heart of hospitality and the industry's greatest resource.

- **Free Education & Training:** The AHLA Foundation, charitable giving arm of AHLA, has provided nearly \$3 million worth of free hospitality training programs, industry certifications and continuing education courses (English as a Second Language, GED & Associate Degree) to nearly 20,000 employees – ensuring employees receive the necessary skills to advance their career and adapt to a new environment.
- **Employee Relief Funds:** Brand and management companies, including Hyatt, Marriott, and Aimbridge, have set up or expanded existing employee relief funds to provide cash to employees who need financial support.
- **Continuation of Benefits:** Recognizing how critical health benefits are to employees during this time, hotel companies are extending health benefits to furloughed employees.
- **Short-Term Job Opportunities:** While employers have had to furlough or layoff staff, they have provided short-term job opportunities to help employees find employment in other industries until travel resumes.



Employees around the country have benefited from free educational opportunities. Here are some of their stories:

- **Anouar El Moujahed, Orlando, FL:** “As one of the employees whose employment was terminated, I am planning to take advantages of this valuable time to finish my courses and graduate from community college. When I saw the scholarship opportunity to finish courses in college, I started to feel hope that my graduation will be possible, therefore, my dream career can be true.”
- **Estephane Gomez, Santa Clara, CA:** “This scholarship helped me pay for school, which I haven’t been able to pay because I had to provide food and a shelter for my daughter. COVID-19 has definitely impacted the world but help like this is what makes a difference. It makes people see the light at the end of the tunnel.”
- **Jesse Boyd, Branson, MO:** “This scholarship opened doors I cannot and allowed me to grow in the industry by gaining a valuable education that I can take with me back into the workforce. I am so excited to have this opportunity, and I really want to thank the organization from the bottom of my heart for this amazing scholarship opportunity.”
- **Melissa Bingham, Phoenix, AZ:** “With this pandemic upon us and our industry reeling due to this unprecedented crisis, I know more than ever that sharpening skills and keeping updated on as much information available to us as possible will enable those who are passionate about this industry to persevere and help bring our industry back stronger than ever. I hope I can be one of those afforded this opportunity.”

AHLA calls on Congress to help hotels retain and rehire employees by extending the Paycheck Protection Program, offering employees direct tuition assistance or tax credits, and expanding the Employee Retention Credit.