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May 20, 2016

The Honorable Tony Cardenas
1510 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Cardenas:

I'm writing to ask for your support of the Stop Online Booking Scams Act, a bill of great importance to the hotel industry in California, as well as nationally.

On Tuesday, the Commerce, Manufacturing & Trade Subcommittee of the Energy & Commerce Committee will be holding a hearing to discuss this bipartisan bill that seeks to crack down on online scams and misleading websites that trick consumers into thinking they are booking directly with a hotel when in fact they are not. The legislation has sixteen co-sponsors, equally divided among Republicans and Democrats, and would make modest reforms that would go a long way toward protecting consumers while they plan their vacations and travel.

When consumers book hotel rooms with certain rogue websites that pose as the hotel's actual website, or which are deceptively non-descript, a range of negative outcomes can result. Among other possibilities, travelers might show up at the hotel and not have a reservation at all, they might incur extra fees, get the wrong room type, or fail to receive the loyalty program points they had expected to earn.

Unfortunately, these problems are quite common and likely to increase as more and more people book rooms on mobile devices, making it harder to discern risky websites from reliable ones.

The Stop Online Booking Scams Act simply provides that a third-party website must continuously disclose that it is not affiliated with the hotel, so that consumers are not misled. The bill also enhances the ability of state attorney generals to enforce protections against such scams and requires the Federal Trade Commission to report on this problem of deceptive booking websites.

We hope that you will support this straightforward bill that will aid and protect consumers and make booking a hotel room online safer and easier for all.

Sincerely,

Lynn S. Mohrfeld, CAE
President & CEO

*Protecting the
rights and interests
of the California
lodging industry*

414 29TH STREET
SACRAMENTO, CA
95816-3211
916.444.5780
www.calodging.com