



March 22, 2023

The Honorable Bobby Joe Champion, Chair
Jobs and Economic Development Committee
3401 Minnesota Senate Bldg
St. Paul, MN 55155

The Honorable Rich Draheim, Ranking Minority Member
Jobs and Economic Development Committee
2225 Minnesota Senate Bldg
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chair Champion, Ranking Minority Member Draheim and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for your consideration of Senate File 2303, to establish an Online Hospitality Training Program, available at no cost to all Minnesotans. We kindly ask for your support, as the hospitality industry continues to be down nearly 15,000 workers and we actively working with partners to diligently re-build a hospitality workforce pipeline. This appropriation would utilize the University of Minnesota Extension faculty (via the University of Minnesota Tourism Center) to develop and maintain an online educational program free to Minnesota residents to establish a hospitality-focused educational program.

The plan is to develop, pilot, and start delivering the program, modeled after South Dakota's online hospitality training program, as quickly as possible. The online program will be actively maintained to keep the program content updated and to answer questions from frontline workers taking the program. Hospitality Minnesota and partner organizations across the state will promote the program to businesses in the industry, encouraging workers to complete the program.

Desired outcomes of this program shall include:

- (1) addressing a need of employers in the industry;
- (2) increased customer service quality, and
- (3) increased sense of competency and engagement among workers that includes knowledge of Minnesota's hospitality and tourism-related offerings

Many hospitality workers of travel and tourism businesses are new to the industry, a phenomenon exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. These new employees, critical to business operations, need customer service training at the basic skill level in order for them to deliver high-quality customer service. As an outcome of the pandemic, industry employers are being stretched further to manage their business and find it difficult to have enough time to get new employees effectively and efficiently trained and onboarded. This ongoing challenge combined with a worker pool that are first time workers and/or new to the hospitality industry underscore the need to create an online asynchronous program that may be accessed across our state.

The main goal is to develop an online asynchronous program that trains hospitality workers on the key aspects of delivering high-quality customer service and affords flexibility in time and location (i.e., workers can complete the training at a time and location convenient for them). The program will be organized into modules. Each module will include video(s), resources as needed and appropriate, and a small quiz. After completing the program, a worker would receive a certificate of completion after

successfully taking a final quiz. The entire program will be mobile device friendly, making it more accessible to as many workers as possible.

Another goal is for the program to meet the standards of “Eligible Training Provider” by the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED). Doing so will broaden the reach of the program dramatically, as DEED’s CareerForce locations throughout Minnesota would be able to:

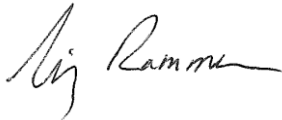
- (1) promote the program, and
- (2) provide access to the program on their devices, addressing the challenge of technology access.

The desired outcome is for new hospitality professionals to see a career path and get prepared to step into leadership roles in the future. Once the program has launched, it will continue to be maintained and delivered by the University of Minnesota Tourism Center, in collaboration with Extension colleagues, the Advisory Committee for the Tourism Center, and industry partners.

We hope the above description has provided a better understanding of the need for this program, and the opportunity an online hospitality training program will provide for new workers. Investing in this program is truly a win-win by developing basic and important skills in our workforce as well as providing these individuals with the knowledge and tools to promote Minnesota’s tourism opportunities.

We are happy to serve as a resource to you and appreciate your support of Senate File 2303.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Liz Rammer". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Liz" being more prominent than the last name "Rammer".

Liz Rammer, President & CEO
Hospitality Minnesota