



Kriss Worthington

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CONSENT CALENDAR

October 2, 2012

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council
 From: Councilmember Kriss Worthington
 Subject: Letter in Support of Hyatt Hotel Workers and Housekeepers

RECOMMENDATION

Send the Hyatt Hotels Corporation a letter urging its leadership to take necessary precautions to protect its workers and housekeepers in the workplace.

BACKGROUND

Hyatt workers and a coalition of supporters have called for a global boycott of the Hyatt hotel chain due to Hyatt's mistreatment of its housecleaners and other hotel workers. Hyatt is being accused of not providing adequate tools and imposing dangerous workloads. Hyatt has also been criticized for exploiting immigrant workers by using temporary, minimum wage subcontracted employees to replace many longtime workers.

Though the federal Occupational and Safety Health Administration's (OSHA) did not issue a citation following its observations of Hyatt workers, it did send a rare post-inspection letter of its findings to Hyatt's executive chairman, Tomas Pritzker. The letter found that Hyatt was not providing proper equipment for its housecleaners and that there was little concern for the health of these workers, who are often assigned heavy workloads and put exceeding amounts of stress on their bodies. Many of these workers have worked for the hotel for decades and are suffering from debilitating injuries.

According to the *San Francisco Bay Guardian* and the *Huffington Post*, Hyatt is also being accused of being aggressive towards unions and giving little in the way of health benefits to its workers. Employees in non-unionized Hyatt locations have complained about low wages, high housekeeping quotas, and disrespect from management. It is vital that Hyatt take more measures to ensure a safe working environment for the sake of its workers and as an example for other hotel companies.

Supporters include groups like the NFL Players Association, the National Organization of Women, and the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, among others.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

None.

CONTACT PERSON

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Attachment:

1. Letter to Thomas Pritzker, Executive Chairman, Hyatt Hotels Corporation

Hyatt Hotels Corporation
c/o Thomas J. Pritzker, Executive Chairman
Hyatt Center
71 South Wacker Drive
Chicago, IL 60606

Dear Chief Executive Pritzker,

Hyatt employees and notable support groups have called for a worldwide boycott of Hyatt for not providing adequate tools and imposing dangerous conditions on its workers. The Berkeley City Council requests that the Hyatt Hotels Corporation immediately take precautions to provide a safe, dignified, and fair workplace for its hotel workers and housekeepers and to address the observations made by the federal Occupational and Safety Health Administration (OSHA) in a letter addressed to you about Hyatt's treatment of its employees.

A study by Dr. Robert Harrison of the University of California, San Francisco has found that the repetitive motions of housekeeping work can lead to a range of muscular injuries at rates higher than factory work. Hyatt housekeepers have uniformly complained about having inadequate tools and being forced to get down on their hands and knees to scrub floors. There are also complaints of not having long handled mops and needing to lift heavy mattresses to fit on sheets. Furthermore, *The American Journal of Industrial Medicine* published a study that found that Hyatt housekeepers have the highest injury rate among a group of fifty hotel properties owned by five major hotel companies.

Hyatt is also being accused of being aggressive towards unions and giving little in the way of health benefits to its workers. Hyatt workers should be free to choose if they want to join a union, and Hyatt should be neutral towards those individuals seeking union membership. Employees in non-unionized Hyatt locations across the United States have complained of low wages, high housekeeping quotas, and disrespect from management. For example, in a July 2011 incident, a Chicago branch Hyatt manager turned heat lamps on striking workers during a heat wave in which degrees soared well over 100 degrees Fahrenheit. Hyatt has also been criticized for exploiting immigrant workers by using temporary, minimum wage subcontracted employees to replace many longtime workers that demand better treatment.

The OSHA did not issue a citation to Hyatt regarding Hyatt's treatment of its workers. However, the OSHA did take the uncommon step of sending you a letter with explicit recommendations and it is abundantly clear that many of your employees, with the support of respected groups like the NFL Players Association, the National Organization of Women, and the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, are unhappy with Hyatt's safety record for its workers. Thus the Berkeley City Council urges Hyatt to be more proactive in providing a safer and more supportive working environment for its employees, whose hard labor behind the scenes allow customers to enjoy the luxury and comfort associated with the Hyatt brand.

Sincerely,

Berkeley City Council