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**CHICAGO HOTELS REQUIRED TO PROVIDE PANIC BUTTONS TO PROTECT WORKERS
FROM SEXUAL HARASSMENT OR ASSAULT**

Hotel Workers Sexual Harassment Ordinance goes into effect July 1, 2018

Mayor Rahm Emanuel today announced that the new Hotel Workers Sexual Harassment Ordinance went into effect requiring all hotels in Chicago to provide panic buttons for hotel housekeeping staff assigned to work alone. The measure is designed to provide protection to the more than 15,000 hospitality workers, most of them female and many of whom are minority, who clean and restock the city's hotel rooms.

"Everyone who works in Chicago deserves safe, secure and empowering professional environments in which to do their jobs," said Mayor Rahm Emanuel. "Those who have been willing to speak out about their experiences, and the countless others who have suffered in silence, deserve not just our respect, but our sustained efforts to prevent, prohibit and punish harassment whenever and wherever it occurs. This ordinance makes it clear that sexual harassment is not just inexcusable and inappropriate, it is illegal."

The ordinance, sponsored by Ald. Michelle Harris (8th) and UNITE HERELocal 1, requires hotels to provide portable buttons that would allow employees to instantly summon help if they are sexually assaulted or harassed by a guest. When the "panic button" is pressed, a message will instantaneously go to the cellphones of supervisors, managers or the organization's human resources department. The panic button is now required for all employees who are assigned to clean, inventory, inspect or restock supplies in a guest room or rest room under circumstances where no other employee is present in such room.

"We have worked closely with the hospitality industry to create this groundbreaking legislation, and Chicago is proud to be at the forefront of this important issue," said Business Affairs and Consumer Protection Commissioner Rosa Escareno. "The City has zero tolerance for the kind of harassment and misbehavior that's being reported by more than half of the hotel staff that cleans and restocks guest rooms. These panic buttons let workers know we are listening and they are not alone: we really do have their backs."

The ordinance was developed as a result of complaints by hotel employees: in a 2016 survey of 500 workers, 58% reported they had experienced at least one incident of sexual harassment by guests, which could include sexually suggestive looks or gestures, as well as being pressured for dates or sexual favors. By far the most common incident, reported by nearly half of hotel workers surveyed, involved guests answering the door naked or exposing themselves.

“Sexual harassment and assault cannot and will not be tolerated in the city of Chicago, and I am proud to stand with so many in improving protections for Chicago’s workers,” said Alderman Michelle Harris. “I thank Mayor Emanuel for supporting this important safety measure to ensure the safety of those who are too often left vulnerable and silent.”

The ordinance also requires hotels to maintain written policies that encourage workers to report incidents of sexual harassment by guests and outline procedures for doing so. In addition, hotels are prohibited from retaliating against an employee for reasonable use of the panic button or for leaving the area of concern. Employees who are harassed or attacked will also be allowed to request assignment to a different room and to take time off to sign a complaint and testify.

“This is a new day for women working in Chicago hotels,” said Karen Kent, President of UNITE HERE Local 1, who began her career as a waitress. “We are forever grateful to our partners, the Chicago Federation of Labor, and to both Mayor Emanuel for his leadership on this and City Council for their unanimous support in making “Hands Off, Pants On” the law in Chicago.”

Said Kimmie, a Chicago hotel housekeeper, “I’m proud that we spoke out together and won protections for women across the city. We deserve to work without fear. This panic button makes me feel safer. Knowing we have the support of my union and the City means I won’t be afraid to speak out if something happens.”

The panic buttons are part of hotel-wide security system that would cost approximately \$100 per room and is able to track the employee by name and hotel room location.

For more information, visit <https://www.cityofchicago.org/city/en/depts/bacp.html> or call [\(312\) 744-2086](tel:3127442086).

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