

UNITEHERE! Local 11

464 Lucas Ave., Suite 201 • Los Angeles, California 90017 • (213) 481-8530 • FAX (213) 481-0352

Feb 16, 2021

VIA EMAIL

Mayor Robert Garcia
411 W Ocean Blvd
Long Beach, CA 90802
cityclerk@longbeach.gov

RE: Item 13 (21-0137): Recommendation to adopt Specifications No. RFP HE21-019 and award a contract to The Illumination Foundation

Honorable Mayor and Councilmembers,

When the pandemic laid bare the fragility of our limited protections for working class and unemployed people in California, the City of Long Beach stepped in to provide housing opportunities for the houseless and worker recall and retention legal requirements for displaced hospitality workers. By purchasing this hotel, the city is performing an essential task of protecting some of our most vulnerable residents (the houseless) in this critical moment. But we urge the Council to not forget the former workers at the hotel, who need to be protected as well. Finally, we do urge the Council to carefully choose the properties to put into this program and thoughtfully manage the transitions from hotels to interim or long-term housing, as not all hotels are suitable for these programs.

As the Council recognized in passing the hospitality worker recall and retention law, the pandemic has had a particularly devastating impact on the hotel industry. The hospitality industry union UNITE HERE has estimated that 80 to 90% of its workers have been laid off during the crisis. The reconfiguration of this property provides an opportunity to put some of the hotel's former employees back to work. While we believe the recall and retention law does cover situations such as this, we urge the Council to specifically write into the contract requirements that the recipient of this award and any of its contractors at the site provide former workers of the Best Western the first opportunity to come back to work at any position they are qualified for at the location before any new employees are hired.

The situation at Long Beach's Holiday Inn is illustrative. The County of Los Angeles purchased the Holiday Inn Hotel in Downtown Long Beach hotel to use for Project Homekey. Some workers were laid off and never called back by the County. Others were replaced by subcontractors. We hope to avoid this situation at this location.

Finally, on a more general note, we urge the Council to keep in mind that some properties may be better for this program than others and that these transitions are quite sensitive for working people. Hotels and motels that have kitchenettes, for example, will be easier to convert into housing than other hospitality properties. Apartment complexes will of course prove even easier still. Additionally, given that this property will now only

have 17 employees,¹ some of whom are likely to be case managers and other roles that are not similar to the previous positions available at the hotel, this program may lead to long-term challenges for the former employees without the kind of careful stewardship we have proposed above.

Thank you,

Kurt Petersen

Kurt Petersen

Co-President, UNITE HERE Local 11

¹ Staff Report (1/29/21),

[http://longbeach.legistar.com/ViewReport.ashx?M=R&N=Master&GID=6&ID=4793322&GUID=7D62D314-372F-4F0D-92C1-827249C59615&Extra=WithText&Title=Legislation+Details+\(With+Text\)](http://longbeach.legistar.com/ViewReport.ashx?M=R&N=Master&GID=6&ID=4793322&GUID=7D62D314-372F-4F0D-92C1-827249C59615&Extra=WithText&Title=Legislation+Details+(With+Text)), p. 3.