

To the Honorable <INSERT NAME HERE>

This letter is in regards to the lodging reimbursement rates set by CalHR and the Bargaining Units for state employees on official business. I work as a <<Job Title>> for <<Hotel Chain/ State Agency>>.

According to the CalHr website, the lodging reimbursement rate for my area is <<Insert Dollar Amount>> per night, but the average daily rate in the area is <<Insert Dollar Amount>> per night.

For Hotels: As a result of these low rates, it is difficult for my establishment to offer lodging to State of California employees who are traveling on official business. Rates statewide have increased by double digits for the past 5 years while the State of California lodging rates have remained stagnant for the past 15 years. In order for lodging establishments to continue to accommodate State of California travelers, consideration must be given to increasing the reimbursement rate to closer align with the industry average daily rates in the area. The State of California must consider matching Federal Rates in order to secure rooms for travelers and remove rate setting from a Collective Bargaining process that is inflexible and classifies lodging reimbursement as a "benefit" as opposed to what it really is: a "business expense". A single Government Rate makes sense for all parties involved and would ensure State Travelers have access to rooms when their business demands it and eliminates competition between state and federal government travelers.

For Travelers: As a result of these low rates, it is difficult for me to find lodging in many city centers where I conduct business. If I can find a Federal Rate I have to go through the extra steps to complete the STD255C (Insert name of form), in the timeline required or I will be faced with staying at locations that are further from my business and may include a substandard hotel that is neither safe nor comfortable. Most of time, I book at a higher rate and pay the difference out of my own pocket. Regardless, state travelers should not have to pay out of pocket for business related lodging. If we choose a Federal rate, Federal ID is required at check-in and I will be denied access if I cannot produce the required ID for the rate. Submitting a STD255C after the fact is not an option, since it will be denied.

Lodging rates will continue to increase regardless of what direction the State takes at this point. The Department of General Services has drafted an issue paper outlining these challenges, and provided data to support removing the setting of lodging rates from Collective Bargaining. I am asking that you assist in moving this issue paper along. Matching Federal Rates will give State Travelers access to inventory that is not

only available to Federal Government Traveler. This simple change will allow me to be able to do my business safely and securely and expand my lodging options beyond the limitations I face with a rate that is so low it will not be honored for much longer.

If you have any questions or need additional information.....