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AAHOA Names Cecil Staton as New President & CEO

Fmr. Educator, Statesman, & Entrepreneur Helms Nation's Largest Hotel Owners Assoc.

NEW ORLEANS, La., Nov.14 – Following a vote by the AAHOA Board of Directors, Cecil Staton will be the new president and CEO of AAHOA, the nation's largest hotel owners association, effective November 18, 2019. Staton will succeed Rachel Humphrey who served in the role in an interim capacity for most of 2019. Humphrey will resume her duties as the association's chief operating officer. Staton, most recently the Chancellor Emeritus at East Carolina University (ECU) in Greenville, N.C., brings decades of experience in the fields of government, academia, and business to AAHOA.

Staton served as the eleventh Chancellor at ECU from 2016 to 2019 where he launched several initiatives to elevate the university's national and international profile, increase enrollment in the Brody School of Medicine, and create a \$500 million capital campaign. Previously, he served as Interim President of Valdosta State University, and as Vice Chancellor for Extended Education with the University System of Georgia. In addition to his work in academia, Staton served five terms in the Georgia State Senate where he rose to the position of Majority Whip. His entrepreneurial ventures include founding two publishing companies and Georgia Eagle Media, Inc., a holding company with interests in multiple broadcast and print mediums. Staton sits on the boards for NAFSA: Association of International Educators and the University of Georgia Board of Visitors.

"I am excited at this opportunity to work with nearly 19,000 small business owners. The achievements that AAHOA's members continue to realize in the hospitality industry make them a living testament to the American Dream. Their hard work, unwavering entrepreneurial spirit, and determination to create their own success are truly inspiring," said Staton. "The great energy and excitement from AAHOA's 30th anniversary celebrations earlier this year still resonate to this day. Rachel and her team did a brilliant job maintaining that momentum and capitalizing on it with increased member and industry engagement. I am looking forward to working with the AAHOA Board of Directors, our industry partners, and the great teams in Atlanta and Washington, D.C. as we continue the exceptional work AAHOA does on behalf of America's hoteliers."

AAHOA Chairwoman Jagruti Panwala said, "AAHOA is at its strongest point in our thirty-year history. Membership is at an all-time high, our educational and advocacy initiatives are thriving, and our members are more engaged than ever before. Throughout the comprehensive search process, we looked for someone who would excel in building upon the foundation of AAHOA's

success, welcome opportunities to develop relationships with our key stakeholders, and bring a vision to the association that will enhance AAHOA's profile in the industry. We are confident that we found such an exemplary leader in Cecil Staton."

"We are excited that Cecil is joining AAHOA," said Interim President and CEO Rachel Humphrey. "He brings a wealth of experience from fields that mirror the association's priorities, specifically, advocacy and education. As an accomplished legislator in the Georgia Senate, as a leader and administrator at East Carolina University and Valdosta State University, and as a small business owner, Cecil understands what drives the association and its members and will position AAHOA for continued success."

Staton's hiring concludes a comprehensive nationwide search that began earlier this year. An AAHOA Executive Search Committee, comprised of AAHOA executives, officers, and executives from key industry partners, worked with consulting firm Korn Ferry to identify candidates and conduct extensive in-depth interviews with each. The Committee unanimously recommended Staton to the AAHOA Board of Directors.

About AAHOA:

AAHOA is the largest hotel owners association in the world. The over 18,500 AAHOA members own almost one in every two hotels in the United States. With billions of dollars in property assets and hundreds of thousands of employees, AAHOA members are core economic contributors in virtually every community. AAHOA is a proud defender of free enterprise and the foremost current-day example of realizing the American dream.

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