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### **AAHOA member tells Congress to curb drive-by lawsuits**

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Asian American Hotel Owners Association member Mili Shah urged a congressional panel today to take action to curb illegitimate drive-by lawsuits filed under the Americans with Disabilities Act in order to coerce small businesses to settle for thousands of dollars.

“Hotels and other small businesses have come under attack by unscrupulous attorneys and serial plaintiffs seeking to make a quick buck from small business owners like me,” Shah told the Subcommittee on the Constitution and Civil Justice.

These lawsuits, frequently for non-existent or easily-fixed issues, are often filed by the dozens—or even the hundreds—at a time by the same plaintiff and attorney and using nearly identical claims.

“Hoteliers have long supported the ADA because we want to provide a welcoming experience for all of our guests and ensure they can enjoy all of the amenities available,” Shah testified. “Unfortunately, the law has become a weapon for scheming lawyers seeking to squeeze small business owners into quick settlements.”

Shah, who owns two hotels in Atlanta, Georgia, testified in favor of the ADA Education and Reform Act, H.R. 3765, which would give businesses a chance to correct alleged ADA issues before litigation and requiring that the claims be specified in more detail.

Overly vague claims are a hallmark of these types of lawsuits. Shah told the committee a recent lawsuit against her hotel alleged the pool lacked an accessible entry. The pool, however, has been closed, empty, and covered by a tarp as long as she’s owned the property. The plaintiff, who’s filed nearly 100 similar lawsuits using similar, extremely vague language, never stayed at the property or had a reservation.

“It’s clear that this plaintiff has no desire to stay at the properties he targets and makes claims that do not apply to the specific properties,” Shah told the subcommittee.

In contrast, the bill “focuses on eliminating barriers instead of encouraging quick settlements for attorney’s fees,” said Shah.

Chip Rogers, president and CEO of AAHOA, commented, “The ADA Education and Reform Act is a big step forward for the ADA. Abuse of the law by unscrupulous attorneys and plaintiffs for a quick payday undermines its goal of increasing access for everyone. Giving businesses the opportunity to specifically identify and fix problems before beginning costly litigation will ultimately strengthen the law and help eliminate barriers.”

*Founded in 1989, AAHOA ([www.aahoa.com](http://www.aahoa.com)) is the largest hotel owners association in the world, with more than 15,000 small business owner-members. AAHOA members own almost one in every two hotels in the United States.*

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