

March 27, 2024

The Honorable Arthur J. Corvese
Chairman, House Committee on Labor
Rhode Island State House
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

Re: *Opposition to H 7531*

Chairman Corvese and Members of the House Labor Committee,

As a bartender at Café Nuovo located in Providence, I write to express my opposition to H 5731, which would eliminate the tipped minimum wage.

Working as a tipped employee in the hospitality industry provides me the opportunity to maximize my earning potential through earning gratuities by providing excellent customer service. I am concerned about the negative effects this bill would have on my income, shift availability and flexibility, and the overall hospitality experience by imposing increase wage burdens on restaurants, rather than the current system supported by customer gratuities.

If implemented, I believe restaurants will be forced to implement new policies to absorb these increased costs that could harm businesses, customers, and servers. Raising menu prices poses risks to the volume and frequency that our patrons would dine out. Losing customers or seeing them less frequently would result in reduced needs for staffing, reducing staffing needs, taking away the flexibility and opportunities for me to earn a living in hospitality.

Other options like imposing a house service charge to cover the shift in wage responsibility may drastically reduce or eliminate entirely gratuities generated from customers, leaving my earnings closer to the minimum wage than they currently are. It is important to note that I make far in excess of the current \$14 minimum hourly wage, and while this bill is claimed to support raising my wages, I fear its actual impact would be to lower it.

If this bill were to pass, I would unquestionably leave my position and the industry entirely due to the untenable reduction in earning potential, making it impossible to earn a livable wage.

I respectfully ask that you oppose H 7531. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Christopher White
Chepachet, RI