

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 server at Chomp Kitchen and Drinks 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 increased 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, in a world where the cost of living is already rapidly increasing. Losing customers or seeing them less frequently would result in reduced needs for staffing, 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, myself and my coworkers could find ourselves either out of a job entirely, due to either reduced staffing or our restaurant closing if it can't subsidize the cost of paying an hourly wage. If we are able to keep our jobs, we could be in a position to be suddenly making a much smaller income than we currently do, leading to financial hardship.

At Chomp, the cornerstone to our philosophy on service is hospitality, being able to create unique, magical experiences for guests that dine with us. If there is no incentive for tipping, the hospitality industry might suffer in several ways. There could be a reduction in the quality of service provided, as servers may be less motivated to provide exceptional service without the prospect of additional earnings. This could ultimately result in a decline in overall customer

satisfaction as well as getting rid of the idea of hospitality. Tipping and hospitality provides a performance based income. The option for servers like myself to bet on ourselves to make a gesture, go the extra mile to make someone's visit, or their day extraordinary allows us to make a living with nobility. The pride I take, and see my coworkers take in our job allows people to have a unique and special experience when choosing Chomp out of the other amazing unique options we have in Rhode Island. Eliminating the incentive to tip could compromise the restaurant industry as a whole, something that is part of our state's identity and community. I love my job, and I love providing hospitality to guests. An industry where this is no longer the standard would not be an industry I would like to be a part of.

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

Sincerely,

Evening Iwanowicz, Cranston RI