

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 Georges of Galilee located in Narragansett, 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 no longer be able to stay in the industry nor would I be able to live and pay my bills. My career that I have worked my entire life for would be ruined.

I have worked in the restaurant industry for over 20 years now. I have spent those years perfecting my craft and rely on gratuities to live. I've spent that time learning how to create a unique experience for every guest.

You cannot put a number on how much each restaurant employee should be paid. I would like to point out that our salary is determined by each guest and what we provide for that individual.

This industry, like many other professions, cannot have a set pay scale. The industry as whole would collapse. There are no incentives to do a better job and work harder. I would say every single person that goes out to eat is not just there for the food. They are there for a memorable experience created solely by the person serving them.

If this bill passes not only, would it cause businesses to close it would have a devastating effect on so many people's lives.

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

Sincerely,

Jon Aguirrechu

Narragansett, Rhode Island, 02882