



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 an owner of three great restaurant locations in Cranston, East Greenwich, and Narragansett, I write today to express my opposition to H 5731, which would eliminate the tipped minimum wage.

As a 45-year industry person, beginning my journey as a server myself with my husband as a cook in our own forty seat restaurant, today with three restaurants and 100 team members, I have been front and center in the hospitality industry for many years and I can honestly say that this industry is built on its approach to incentivizing guest service, providing team members optimal wages, while also meeting the needs for flexible schedules that support the demands of parenting and college education and providing first-time positions to our youth.

A bit about our industry. Industry statistics tell us that we are an industry built on thirds. One third are career professionals (generally managers and culinary teams), one third part-time and temporary (generally first-time jobs for high school students and serving teams that are college students) and one third transitional, those struggling in life to find their calling. This is a constant in our industry and one which any restaurant owner can speak to.

For restaurants to continue to provide first-time and part-time positions, it is essential to maintain tipped wages.

Not only does it allow tipped team members to receive a wage well above minimum wage and in doing so providing flexible schedules for parents and students, it also allows the restaurant a means to maintain affordable menu pricing for communities and career incentives for managers and full-time team members.

You can see that any change to the system would result in not only an effect on the tipped team members, but those of full-time non-tipped wage earners, guests, day-cares, and colleges. It would reduce the first-time wage-earning positions for students and the very spirit that drives community.

It is my absolute belief that if tipped wage were eliminated, we would see a complete shift in our industry's hiring practices resulting in the elimination of service positions, reduction of first-time positions for students and part-time positions for parents, a cascading impact on other industries would ensue.

Many may think by eliminating the tip credit we are in support of tipped team members, but I would respectfully ask us to consider that we currently have a system in place that requires restaurants to pay minimum wage if tipped wage falls short, so what is the benefit in adjusting or eliminating the positivity of the tipped wage?

The elimination of tipping credit could be a catastrophe for our industry, and I believe other industries would also bear the effects. I respectfully urge you to consider opposing H 7531. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Tina Tomaselli
Warwick, RI