

March 5, 2025

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

Re: *Opposition to H 5507*

Chairman Corvese and Members of the House Labor Committee,

I began working in the restaurant industry at 16, taking a job at a family-owned restaurant because I needed employment. Little did I know that this decision would shape my career and provide opportunities I never imagined. From my first role as a hostess to becoming a server, I worked my way up and gained invaluable experience in the hospitality industry. It was during my time as a server that I was able to purchase my first home at a young age, something I'm incredibly proud of. This wouldn't have been possible without the tipped wage, which allowed me to earn a living based on my hard work and dedication to providing great service.

The hospitality industry is one of the most rewarding fields to be part of because it offers so many opportunities for growth and advancement. But just like any business, success comes with hard work, consistency, and a passion for the craft. As a server, my income was directly tied to my effort and the experience I provided to guests. The tipped wage made it possible for me to work hard and see the rewards of that effort in real-time.

Hospitality has always been more than just a job for me—it's been a career path driven by my love for the industry. As I moved from a server to various leadership roles, including restaurant management and now working as the Director of the Education Foundation within the Rhode Island Hospitality Association, I've seen firsthand how rewarding this industry can be when given the chance. The opportunity to earn tips allowed me to have financial stability while pursuing my passion for hospitality, and it continues to do so for countless others.

Eliminating the tipped wage would strip away the potential for hard-working individuals to directly benefit from their service, which has been the foundation of my success in the industry. It would change the dynamic of hospitality jobs, which are already challenging in many ways, and potentially discourage future talent from pursuing careers in this field.

I'm a testament to the success that can come from the opportunities hospitality provides. The flexibility, growth, and earning potential in this field are unique and should be protected for future generations. The tipped wage is part of the fabric of our industry, and eliminating it would be a disservice to the very people who make dining experiences memorable.

The elimination of tip credit could be a catastrophe for our industry. I respectfully ask that you oppose H 5507. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Traci Dufresne

Woonsocket, RI