

Thank you to Chairman Mendelson and to the DC Council for giving me the opportunity to testify in support of full implementation of Initiative 77

My name is Griffin Tanner and I've lived in DC for 6 years and I am a Ward 1 resident. I worked in the restaurant industry in DC for three years first as a runner and later as a bartender. However, this past June, I transitioned out of the service industry.

I was a part of a privileged demographic of restaurant workers who are in the industry only temporarily. I have found that much of the opposition to Initiative 77 has come from folks like me who are least affected by the oppressive pay structure and that troubles me.

The council should not overturn this initiative because of the protests of restaurant owners and temporary participants in the industry. Instead the council should respect the vote of myself, the majority of district's residents, and those workers who are held down by the current wage structure. Overturning the initiative would be an **egregious breach of democracy**.

My own experiences working in the service industry show why initiative 77 would be a positive change for service workers.

When initially hired as a bartender, I earned 7 \$ an hour + tips, but, about half a year into the job, our employer suddenly lowered the base wage to 3 \$ an hour. That's over a 50% decrease in base wage because our tips were quote on quote high enough. This dramatically lowered my expected earnings and affected my financial planning and security. About half of our staff quit. I considered leaving but was in the middle of pursuing a degree and not in a position to search for a new job so I had to rearrange my finances and cut back on spending to deal with the decrease in earnings.

Now, The company was not wrong for doing this because it was completely within their legal right. However, workers should not be subjected to this kind of unpredictability in earnings, whether it's from changes to their base wage by their employer, or from other characteristics in the industry such as inconsistencies in tipings throughout the year. With I-77, a stable base wage would prevent such unpredictability.

I strongly believe there is a way to implement Initiative 77 so that restaurants see higher revenues and tipped workers take home higher earnings. Because of the gradual increase per year until 2026, companies will have time to evolve and rebuild their pricing strategy to account for paying their employees a living wage.

Please, respect the decision made by DC voters. Tipped workers deserve a fair wage just like in California, Nevada, and Alaska.