

Nteboheng Mokuena Testimony in Support of Initiative 77

My name is Nteboheng Maya Mokuena. I am a Ward 5 resident and I am here to testify in support of the Tipped Wage Workers Fairness Amendment Act of 2018.

Not only am I climate and racial justice organizer, but I am a former tipped-wage employee. While some bartenders and waitresses may earn more than \$15/hour with tips, this is not the case for many tipped workers in the District (factcheck). Tipped wages are insecure as some days you may come home with as few as \$2. As a barista and cashier in several cafes in DC, I split my tips with those working the same shift. So, there was never a guarantee of earning \$15/hour, much less \$10/hour. My income insecurity as a tipped employee meant that I was not only living paycheck to paycheck, but that in order to earn more tips, I needed to put up with more sexual harassment, wear makeup to work, and take on more shifts while maintaining my status as a full-time student.

Workers should not have to depend upon the graciousness or harassment of customers to receive living wages -- that is the responsibility of the government and our employers.

Per data provided by US Department of Labor, the pay difference in the District between tipped and non-tipped workers is \$9.17. We can begin to close that gap by enacting a universal minimum wage for tipped and non-tipped workers.

You have heard throughout the day that Seattle and DC are not comparable cities. However, of the One Fair Wage cities, Seattle is most comparable to DC, and tipped-wage workers there have seen an *increase* in take-home pay. Furthermore, One Fair Wage states have lower rates of poverty among servers. Keep in mind that this includes places like Seattle and San Francisco, places with comparable costs of living to that of DC.

Not only is passing Initiative 77 imperative, but it is democratic. Over 55% of voters in most wards -- 1, 4, 5, 7, and 8 -- have supported this initiative. DC already does not have federal representation. It would be a huge misstep for Councilmembers to undermine the democratic support for this initiative.

It is the responsibility of the City Council to listen to their residents, who have voted in support of Initiative 77.