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Sophia Miyoshi

Hello my name is Sophia Miyoshi and I thank the Council for giving me the opportunity to speak on this very important issue.

I have worked in the restaurant industry for seven years. Throughout this time I learned that working in this industry is hard work that requires physical, mental and emotional labor. And that additionally it is one in which abuses, biases and harassment can run rampant. On top of the intensity of our work we also have to sexual harassment from customers, coworkers and even bosses, racial discrimination in hiring and promotion practices, immigration threats, and general daily abuses.

Because of what I experienced and witnessed working in restaurants -- all that was tolerated and normalized -- I wanted to do what I could to help improve the industry that I hold so close to me. I became a member at the Restaurant Opportunities Center and eventually was brought on as a community organizer, which is what my role is today.

I am here in support of Initiative 77.

Councilmembers, I urge you to not repeal this initiative. It's difficult to watch the repeal get passed in good faith when there is evidence of monetary incentives from business owners and the National Restaurant Association. Especially when DC has already cast their vote. There has been a lot of noise on Initiative 77 but we can't forget that at the end of the day it is a progressive policy that will raise wages and lift the floor for low-wage workers.

I am not here to argue tipping practices, although I can tell you I have worked in two states as a tipped worker receiving \$7/hr to \$13/hr and in both places I received a good amount of tips, but I also had a paycheck I could rely on.

What I will say is that restaurant work is a profession, and therefore should be treated like one. Working in the restaurant industry has been highly devalued and many people who are not in the industry do not see or treat these jobs as a career. It is not possible for our industry to be truly professionalized when we are being paid \$3 to \$5 an hour. Professionalism starts with professional wages.