



**NATIONAL NETWORK OF  
ABORTION FUNDS**

**Testimony in Support of Initiative 77: Renee Bracey Sherman (September 17, 2018):**

Thank you, Chairman Mendelson and the Committee of the Whole DC City Council, for giving me this opportunity to share my comments on Initiative 77. My name is Renee Bracey Sherman and I am a resident of Ward 4. I am the Senior Public Affairs Manager at the National Network of Abortion Funds and a member of the coalition All\* Above All which unites organizations and individuals to build support for lifting bans that deny abortion coverage.

I am here to today to testify in favor of the full implementation of Initiative 77. In June, I went to the polls and voted yes on Initiative 77 in order to eliminate the subminimum wage and make an important step toward a world where all individuals are guaranteed economic security.

Repealing Initiative 77 would undermine my vote and the democratic process. Fifty-five percent of D.C.'s voters decided to phase out the subminimum wage and enact One Fair Wage for all workers. In most wards, including my own, the initiative passed with *more* than 55 percent of the vote.

When I supported Initiative 77 at the ballot box, not only was I voting my economic justice values, but I was also voting in support of my friends and loved ones who have worked in the restaurant industry and earned a subminimum wage. I know this all too well. For years, I worked in the retail industry and at one point depended on commission for my income. It wasn't sustainable, and like restaurant workers, it was difficult to live on a fluctuating, unpredictable income.

The comparison stops there though because I had the guarantee of a base minimum wage, a guarantee that restaurant workers in D.C. don't genuinely have. This initiative sought to rectify that -- that's what I and the rest of DC voters supported when we went to the polls. I believe each of us should be able to live, work and make decisions about our future, with dignity and economic security. Fair wages are critical to making this a reality for every person. You might wonder why I am so deeply in support of this as a reproductive justice advocate; well that's because economic justice and thriving wages goes hand in hand with the fight for reproductive justice and healthcare access. In D.C., because of interference by Congress through the Hyde and the Dornan Amendment, which ban federal funding and DC funding of abortion through Medicaid coverage, individuals living on low-incomes are forced to pay for abortions out of pocket. DC residents on Medicaid are not truly afforded access to comprehensive reproductive health care, including abortion, and then they're doubly punished when they cannot earn a living wage. For women in DC, a fair wage can mean the difference between being able to afford health care or going without. Fair pay can mean those struggling to get by have more options when deciding whether to become a parent. I know this reality -- I was 19 working in retail, barely earning minimum wage when I became pregnant and needed an abortion. I couldn't use my insurance and had to max out a credit card to pay the \$500 out of pocket. I can't imagine how much more I would have had to struggle if I were earning the substandard wage of barely over \$3 an hour like many restaurant workers. I support Initiative 77 so that everyone in D.C. can have that same access to healthcare, a safe workplace, and a living wage in reality, not just in words or hypotheticals. I urge the council to uphold the will of the people of D.C. and stand behind this momentous measure to advance economic justice and security.

**TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION TO BILL 22-913**

As prepared for delivery September 17, 2018

**TO:** Philip Mendelson, Chair, and Members of the D.C. Council

**FROM:** Julie Vogtman, Director of Job Quality & Senior Counsel, National Women's Law Center

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My name is Julie Vogtman. I'm Director of Job Quality for the National Women's Law Center here in D.C. And while I appreciate the opportunity to deliver testimony today, I am deeply disappointed that I must do so to defend a democratically enacted measure that would improve the lives of so many women, men, and families in the District, in the face of this Council's threats to overturn it.

I and my colleagues at the Law Center advocated for Initiative 77 for reasons that I will expand upon in my written testimony but won't detail in these three minutes, since I know you've heard them before. In short, we support Initiative 77 because tipped workers in the District, most of whom are women and people of color, face an unacceptably high risk of poverty and economic insecurity. Because a workplace where customer whims dictate whether workers get paid creates an environment that is ripe for sexual harassment. And because having one fair minimum wage is good for workers, good for business, and simply the right thing to do.

I knew that the money and the power of the restaurant industry were against us. When the National Restaurant Association has worked to keep the federal tipped minimum wage at \$2.13 an hour for 27 years, it's no surprise to see it band together with the local industry to spread misinformation and keep wages low here, too. But I knew that the people were with us. And I thought that the Council that has enacted laws to guarantee paid family and medical leave and paid sick days, combat discrimination, protect women's access to reproductive health care, and so many other pieces of progressive legislation might be with us, too. I thought, at a minimum, that the Councilmembers who so vocally oppose the lack of voice that their constituents have in the halls of Congress just down the street might concede that they should respect the will of the more than 47,000 District residents who agreed: it is time for a fair minimum wage for everyone.

But today I'm here because that didn't happen. Because in cosponsoring this bill, a majority of this Council has already signaled its willingness to ignore D.C. voters. To silence the majority of voters in every ward but the wealthiest and whitest. To silence the people who voted for their neighbors and themselves to have a better shot at the income they need to support their families. To silence the women and men who have tolerated the worst from their customers and their bosses, just to make a living. To pretend that D.C. is different in some way – that sexual harassment, wage theft, and poverty don't happen to tipped workers here – when both hard data and working people tell us just the opposite.

So today, I ask you to listen to your constituents, and side with them rather than with the restaurant industry. I ask you to listen especially to the working people in this room who are risking their jobs by speaking up in support of Initiative 77. And I ask you not to take away a raise that so many tipped workers in the District need and deserve.

Thank you.

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*Note: The National Women's Law Center will also file more comprehensive written testimony in opposition to the proposed repeal of Initiative 77 and in support of One Fair Wage for the District of Columbia.*

Testimony for Hearing 77:

Thank you, Chairman Mendelson and the DC Council, for giving me this opportunity to share my comments on Initiative 77. My name is Julia Reticker-Flynn and I am a resident of Ward 1 and have lived in Washington DC for over 14 years.

I am the Director of Youth Organizing at Advocates for Youth, a national non-profit that partners with youth leaders, adult allies, and youth serving organizations to advocate for policies and champion programs that recognize young people's rights to honest sexual health information and services. I am also a member of All\* Above All, a coalition dedicated to lifting bans that deny abortion coverage.

As a resident, a voter, and a person committed to racial, economic, and reproductive justice, I am here to voice my support for initiative 77. I voted in favor of this initiative for three primary reasons. First, the initiative will reduce economic insecurity in DC, especially for women of color. Tipped workers in DC experience nearly twice the poverty rate of DC workers and female tipped workers are twice as likely as male tipped workers to experience poverty. By incrementally increasing the subminimum wage of \$3.33 over the upcoming years, we can take an important step in reducing poverty and increasing economic security in our nation's capital— which has the highest rate of income inequality in the country.<sup>1</sup>

Second, I voted in favor of initiative 77 because it has the potential to make tipped workers safer by reducing the level of sexual harassment and assault. Tipped workers are particularly vulnerable to sexual harassment, intimidation, and assault in a workplace. Unfortunately, over 90% of restaurant workers in DC report sexually harassing behavior in their workplace. However, restaurant workers in states that have eliminated the tipped wage report lower rates of sexual harassment. Therefore, by increasing the tipped minimum wage to DC's minimum wage, we take an important step in challenging the staggering rates of sexual harassment in DC's restaurant industry.

Finally, I voted in favor of initiative 77 because raising the wage for tipped workers does not threaten the restaurant industry. Seven states have already eliminated the sub minimum wage for tipped workers and their restaurant industries are thriving. Workers' wages are higher, the restaurant industry continues to expand, and employment continues to grow. As a customer, I have dined out in many of these states including California and Nevada, and have always tipped at least 20% as I regularly do every time I eat out. I plan to continue to reward good service and to dine out even if prices gradually increase as workers' wages do.

Washington DC has the opportunity to be a leader on the East Coast in providing well paid and a safer work environment for tipped workers. We are a city that values workers, that champions efforts to reduce poverty, and that fights sexual harassment. Being a leader requires us to follow our values and, at times, to take a chance on making our city stronger. I am asking the City Council, to respect my vote and the vote of DC residents, to uphold our values as a city, and to enact the will of the people.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.dcfpi.org/all/income-inequality-dc-highest-country/>