

Hello, My name is Hayley Martin and I have been living and working in Vermont for nearly 5 years. I have found myself working in and out of the service industry since I had my first job, at age 15, bussing in a restaurant. I have been waitressing in Vermont at my current job for nearly two years, and will be turning 24 later this year. With almost a decade of experience working within the food and service industry, I have seen and experienced a number of positive and negative aspects of the work. I love what I do. I love waking up every day with the role of exceeding expectations and providing people with an unforgettable experience. I love working alongside a team with the same mission as my own. But I have found that as I get older, and as more responsibilities introduce themselves into my life, the way in which my pay is determined makes providing for myself challenging in a number of ways. This is why I am writing in support of raising Vermont's tipped minimum wage.

With the current tipped wage of \$5.39, I have found myself put in a number of situations that someone who works more than 40 hours every week, in an insanely wealthy country such as the United States, should not face. Relying mostly on tips for my income has involved a number of unwelcome factors into my financial stability. The unpredictability of my wages is probably the most challenging aspect of my financial life. If the weather is bad, or if it is just *winter*, my income is significantly lower than on a sunny day when people are out and about. I have had to endure countless customers who are comfortable taking advantage of my reliance on their tip, who have harassed me and behaved wildly inappropriately with no consequences. I have had to deny myself meals, or trips to the doctor, on certain occasions, or put off paying bills due to the erratic nature of my pay. I have also had to endure the psychological effects of knowing that my pay, and the monetary value of my work, is determined by someone who has no vested interest in my wellbeing.

And the restaurant industry is still growing. Even despite our country's current economic climate, more and more people are still going out to eat. I work a job that is valuable to my community and its economy. And yet, I am not paid or treated like this is the case. Vermont tipped workers live in poverty at 3.3 times the statewide rate of poverty. Not to mention that nation-wide tipped workers are statistically more likely to be women and minorities. This is a socio-economic issue that needs to be addressed by raising the tipped minimum wage sooner rather than later.

Nearly ten states already have one fair wage. Raising the tipped minimum wage in Vermont would ensure that I still receive a reasonable paycheck regardless of the season, or the weather, or the mood of any given customer I encounter, and would enable me to be more financially secure. Not to mention, the economic stimulation that

would occur if people who worked in the industry had more money to put back into their communities and local businesses.

Please pass One Fair Wage in Vermont and show that workers in the service industry are not only seen and heard, but appreciated as valuable economic assets *and* individual human beings who work hard and deserve a quality standard of life. Thank you very much for taking the time to read my testimony.

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