

My name is Meredith Holbrook and I am currently working as a server in Vermont. I have lived in Vermont my whole 21 years of life, and have been waiting tables for about two years now. Being a college student, I quickly learned that the service industry was the perfect job for me as it mainly entails nights and weekends. I never would have thought that it would be a job that I enjoy, but the constant human interaction has kept it fun and interesting.

Despite this, the service industry in Vermont has some issues that need to be addressed. I am writing in support of raising Vermont's tipped minimum wage. Just this past week, I received a paycheck for 37 hours of work. It was just over ten dollars. My friend saw this and thought it was a mistake, to which I then explained to her the realities of being a server. Every week I allow people to be rude to me, harass me, and make inappropriate comments. I do this in hopes that maybe if I keep a smile on my face, they will leave twenty percent. This is the only job that I have ever worked where my paycheck is reliant on the generosity of the customer.

Another hardship that plays into this is Vermont's harsh weather. When a bad snow storm hits, restaurant workers can expect to be called out, or like I experienced recently, makes seven dollars in a ten hour shift. Although I am told my paycheck should be adjusted accordingly for bad days like these, I have never noticed a difference. With all that is going on in the world, this may appear as an issue low on the totem pole. In reality however, this affects a large population. One in two Americans have worked in the service industry. And in Vermont, tipped workers live in poverty at 3.3 times the statewide rate of poverty. Nearly ten states already have adopted One Fair Wage. By raising the tipped minimum wage, I would no longer have to be at the mercy of sexual harassment and weather. I could continue working the job I love, while knowing I will always be financially secure.

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