

I am writing in support of raising Vermont's tipped minimum wage. The fact that kitchen workers don't make tips creates a toxic divide between the front and back of the house. The kitchen doesn't have to be accountable to the customers, and they make the same amount of money no matter how good or bad a job they do. It gives the back of the house a (potentially) abusive power over the tipped employees. I've seen things happen in restaurants I've served at where the cooks will be petty and purposely screw up an order or be really slow making food for a server they don't like, knowing very well that the result for that server is going to be a bad tip. The fact that half the employees at a restaurant are guaranteed the same paycheck every shift and the other half aren't creates a work environment where coworkers are not incentivized to work together for the common good of the restaurant.

The first restaurant I ever worked at lacked a POS system, so servers had to calculate and write out all checks by hand. The owners of the restaurant had a policy that if a server miscalculates a bill and undercharges someone, she has to pay the difference out of her tip money. I had no experience to compare this to at the time, so I assumed this was a normal thing that restaurants do. It wasn't until I had a conversation with a friend who was shocked when I told her about the policy, and she told me that what my boss was doing was illegal.

In addition to making more money, raising the tipped minimum wage would provide financial security for tipped workers making them more resilient to the potential workplace problems above.

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