

Thank you Chairman Mendelson, and the council as a whole for listening to tipped workers and introducing the bill and giving me this opportunity to speak on why I want initiative 77 repealed for myself, my family, and my future in The District.

My name is Dawn Williams, a Ward 5 resident for 6 years, and a DMV area resident since 2003. Starting in 2004, in my 2nd year at Howard University, I began supporting myself as a part time tipped wage employee.

I never planned on this being my career, it's not why I came to DC or went to Howard, but it is the pathway that was created because of the tip credit. I was working part time paying rent while going to school. But when I realized I really loved my current job, I decided to stop taking out student loans and turn this part time job into a full time career, and I was great at it. That decision changed my life. I stayed in DC, I started a family. My son starts Pre-K3 at Langley Elementary soon, and all of this, my life as I know it, is happening because of my work ethic and the respect it has earned and the tips that I have made because of the effort I put in everyday.

77 is a harmful law that doesn't address the issues it is claiming to fix in a meaningful way. 77 throws money at problems and has no actual policy that might help workers. DC already has a law saying tipped employees who don't make minimum wage must be paid the difference, so we are already guaranteed minimum wage. So I have to stop and ask, why? If so many people, tipped workers, like myself are against it, who is this for?

If someone wants just to make minimum wage, there are jobs for that person. But the time, thoughtfulness and energy that I give to my career everyday, deserves a greater potential than minimum wage and what I bring home in tips reflects that.

Hospitality is a skill that I developed with time, patience, and practice. It takes specific types of individuals to succeed in this profession. This career wasn't made for everyone. It is more than just a job to me, hospitality is my life and my livelihood.

A tip credit system has given me more freedom in job flexibility and a greater growth potential. It has created an industry where there are more potential jobs because we aren't limited by a flat unlivable wage for all of us, that means more potential for people to get hired. The lower base wage creates more jobs which translate to more potential tips. And that for me has always meant I have made more money than the minimum wage was offering. This is also creating more opportunity all across our city as it grows and small local ownership is becoming the norm.

To know what hospitality workers really need requires the lived experience of people who do this everyday. I thank the voters who thought this would be helpful, but unfortunately they were voting for a poorly and naively written law that will not be proactive in any way for DC's growing restaurant and bar industry.

I want to continue to grow my career and family here, my tips make that possible, but without the tipping system I would absolutely consider moving elsewhere with my family. That's not what I want but if 77 is not repealed I would rather do that than risk losing hours, shifts, and income.

I want 77 repealed so that we in the hospitality and nightlife industry can work together to create solutions that work for everyone involved not some outside interest group who knows nothing about us and who we are. I thank you for introducing this repeal because it is a first step in the right direction to keep this bad law from slowing or even stopping our potential growth together as a city and our industry community.