

My name is Violette Davis and I own The Looking Glass Lounge in the Petworth neighborhood in Ward 1. It is a bar that is often compared to Cheers. My business partner and I have been running Looking Glass for almost nine years now. 95 percent of our staff live in DC with 41 percent being able to walk to work. One of our charms is that people in our neighborhood come in, knows our staff and interacts with them, not as bartender to patron, but as actual people. My staff seems happy too, with more than half have been at Looking Glass for three or more years.

If 77 passes, our payroll will more than double. This will be practically impossible to make up. We have two bars, one being a speak easy style bar attached to a small patio. Currently we have this bar staffed every day. Our bartenders have their regulars and can close when they see fit. If 77 passes, we will most likely not staff this bar every evening. This not only takes a shift away from my staff, but it hurts the soul of my bar.

One thing that our business allows is flexibility. 32 percent of our staff have children under the age of 4. Cortney has been working for us for over four years now. She has an 8 year old and a 2 year old. One thing she is able to do, is come in early to set up the bar and then leave to pick up her daughter from school, returning later to work her shift. This is a flexibility that we can only allow now that the Bartender and Serving staff are not dependent on hourly wages.

Our kitchen is run by a young lady named Tamika. I have seen her grow from a novice cook when she started in 2013 to becoming our kitchen manager. Tamika is our highest paid hourly worker and yet she makes less hourly than our bartenders and servers make in an average night. I am pointing this out because it has been my mission to try to figure out how to pay our hourly workers more to make up the difference in pay between the back and front of house. But with rent rising every year, minimum wage increasing and new competition opening around us every month, we are having trouble maintaining as is. We have already had to cut back hours of our kitchen, have our barbacks come in for less hours, and not have doormen certain days. This is my main fear with 77. It is not so much for my servers and bartenders, for many will maintain their shifts, but it is for the support staff that are already making the least amount of money and who's jobs are not as crucial in keeping our doors open.

In six years when our lease runs out, I have always had plans to either move Looking Glass or open a new bar or restaurant in DC. I have lived on the same three block radius for 15 years. The idea of moving has never crossed my mind until now. If 77 passes, I would not be able to open another place in DC and would most likely leave. Please just keep in mind that I am not just looking out for me, but I am looking out for all my staff and business. Yes, there are issues with the bar business, but the hourly paid to our bartenders and servers is not the right fight to be having.

Thank you for your time.

Violette Davis  
Managing Partner  
The Looking Glass Lounge