

Testimony of Yana Tarakanova
Bill 22-913

I am a DC resident I live in ward 2 and work as a server in Ghibellina on 14th street. I have been in restaurant industry for over 6 years. I am a professional server. I would like to underline the word "professional". Since the dc restaurant scene has started growing and developing, you cannot stay where you are, you have to constantly educate yourself and be up-to-date with food and beverage knowledge in order to be a qualified and sought after employee. It takes a lot of efforts and a lot of investments too. If Initiative 77 takes effect, there is no way that professional servers or bartenders will want to stay in this industry anymore and all that we have been building for decades will collapse. It will be just impossible to go to a restaurant for some great gourmet experience, this notion will not simply exist. Tip credit is a type of reward that you get for your hard work, for your knowledge, for your service as a host of your guest, as a guide to an imaginary food and drink tour that you take your patron on. How can one put a price tag (\$15/hr) on a different type of experience that you might get in a restaurant? I want to underline the word "restaurant" in this case, not counter service places, fast food chains, food carts, etc. How can one even up every single restaurant employee from a runner to a mixologist who have different responsibilities and completely different qualifications? My occupation, which is my hobby and passion, not always very easy but, for sure, very rewarding, is the way I afford living in DC and enjoying my life in full while being a minority. Besides this point, I want to sign off on all my colleagues' words about misleading description of Initiative 77 that tries to confuse people who do not know that tipped employees are already protected by law and minimum

wage is guaranteed for every restaurant worker. Imagine the enormous damage that Initiative 77 may cause to DC small businesses. Imagine decreasing amount of jobs and opportunities that restaurant industry creates so well nowadays. Let's not try to restore justice! Just ask any tipped restaurant worker in DC if they are happy with the current tip credit system and you will get your answer. We support the current tip credit system, we get paid much more than minimum wage, and we are against Initiative 77!