



March 30, 2021

Dear Congress,

On behalf of nearly 6 million tipped workers and 14 million restaurant workers nationwide who have been devastated by this pandemic, I write with an urgent request. **Please spend an hour serving in our shoes – to find out what it's like to do the backbreaking work we do, now in masks while enforcing public health mandates on the very same customers we rely on for our wages because of the federal subminimum wage.**

The pandemic has made our hard jobs even harder. Our tips have gone down, while sexual harassment has gone up. And research has proven that sexual harassment and racial discrimination in the restaurant industry are a direct result of the subminimum wage. Yet we've heard that some United States Senators don't want to give us the same basic fair wage as all other Americans and want to cut us out of the Raise the Wage Act – and keep this unfair, unjust legacy of slavery intact.

But the majority of restaurant workers and the majority of Americans want Congress to end the subminimum wage. We are attaching petitions from 140,000 of us tipped service workers who demand to be paid a full livable wage of \$15 an hour with tips on top, not only to survive and feed our families but also to be able to go back to work in restaurants at all. **You can stand on the side of justice and stand with restaurant workers in this important moment by working alongside us as a "Server For An Hour."**

As you know, the Raise the Wage Act includes not only raising the minimum wage to \$15 an hour but also ending the subminimum wage for tipped workers. A legacy of slavery, the subminimum wage for tipped workers is just \$2.13 an hour today and causes a mostly female workforce of tipped workers to struggle with the lowest wages and highest rates of sexual harassment of any industry. Seven states (CA, OR, WA, NV, MT, MN, AK) already require One Fair Wage – a full minimum wage for all tipped

workers with tips on top - and have higher restaurant job growth rates, higher small business growth rates, and the same or higher rates of tipping than the 43 states with a subminimum wage for tipped workers.

During the pandemic, our industry was devastated; 6 million of us lost our jobs and 60% of tipped workers faced severe challenges accessing unemployment insurance because in most states, we were told our subminimum wage plus tips was too low to qualify for benefits. Millions of us thus had to return to work before we felt safe, and we were asked to do so much more for so much less - we were asked to enforce social distancing and mask rules on the same customers from whom we had to get tips to survive, at a time when tips are already down 50-75% because sales are down. Worst of all, sexual harassment has gone way up during the pandemic, with men regularly asking women servers to remove their masks so they can judge their looks and their tips on that basis. If we had a full minimum wage The subminimum wage for tipped workers was a legacy of slavery and source of racial, gender and economic injustice before the pandemic – now it's a matter of life and death.

We want to thank those of you who voted to pass the Raise the Wage Act. We know negotiation must happen to get the bill across the finish line, but we encourage you to ensure that all workers, including tipped workers, workers with disabilities, and youth who currently receive a subminimum wage, eventually reach 100% of the wage. Anything less would be perpetuating a legacy of slavery and a devaluation of Black lives and women's work. **We're now writing to ask if you would join us for just one hour during your recess at a local 'high road' restaurant that has received support through the ARP to step into the shoes of a tipped worker as a "Server For An Hour."** Your leadership could help send a message to your colleagues in Congress that the racist, sexist subminimum wage *must go* – and should not be a part of any final legislation.

Your staff can let us know if you're interested in learning more or setting a day and time by contacting Yamila Ruiz, One Fair Wage Communications Director, at yamila@onefairwage.org. Thank you again for your leadership to finally raise the minimum wage for all workers, including restaurant workers !

Sincerely,

Saru Jayaraman

Co-Founder and President, One Fair Wage