

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE PUBLIC HEARING

The Committee of the Whole will hold a Public Hearing on the following Legislation:

Bill 22-913, Tipped Wage Workers Fairness Amendment Act of 2018

Monday, 9/17/2018, 11:00am, Room 500, Wilson Building

I am David Schwartzman, representing the DC Statehood Green Party and myself as candidate for Council At-Large.

I strongly urge the Council to implement the provisions of Initiative 77, approved by voters in the Primary Election.

I won't repeat the compelling testimony of others in this hearing regarding the minimal impact of implementation on employment, tip income and menu prices in the restaurant industry as well as the blatant and arrogant disrespect for the democratic process shown by this bill repealing the vote on Primary Day to implement Initiative 77. Note that Council members raise stronger enforcement to address the challenge of wage theft violations as an alternative to implementation of ONE FAIR WAGE provisions of Initiative 77. Attorney Renee Bowser's testimony on our panel provides a powerful critique of this alleged alternative. Likewise, Daniel Katz (Senior Counsel, Washington Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs) made a similar point in his testimony, that implementation of Initiative 77 would in itself reduce wage theft and make for stronger enforcement.

At the very least, Initiative 77 should be implemented, and followed up by legislation for a higher minimum wage for all workers than \$15 per hour, which now falls short of what is needed for true self-sufficiency in the high cost DC environment. Given the fact that roughly 70% of tipped workers are people of color (DCFPI report), especially those who are paid below the federal poverty level with a greater fraction of women, ONE FAIR WAGE is an economic, racial and gender justice issue that is being disrespected by the industry lobbying here today against Initiative 77.

I also observe that our Council Chairperson Mendelson who is championing repeal had received generous campaign donations, more than \$30,000 from the businesses and executives who opposed Initiative 77 before the Primary (Fenit Nirappil, Washington Post, September 15, 2018, B1). I suspect that OCF filings will demonstrate a similar pattern for other Councilmembers who support repeal. Pay to play, once again.

The main causes of poverty, especially for children in our community are the low wage levels of tipped workers, and TANF income support corresponding to 36% of the Federal Poverty Level (this coming fiscal year). Using our more than ample DC tax base, both must be remedied by the DC Council to eliminate this egregious human rights violation. Increase the DC income tax rate on wealthy residents and eliminate housing subsidies for gentrification and displacement of long term residents., Make our DC Human Rights City a reality!

Finally, Chairperson Mendelson asked every panelist if they were DC residents. I have lived the last 42 years in DC. I can afford to live here, in contrast to many low-wage tipped workers who cannot because of the lack of affordable housing driven by the Mayor/DC Council's trickle-down housing policies, following the agenda of the Federal City Council.

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