

Why I Support One Fair Wage for All

In Our Own Voice: National Black Women's Reproductive Justice Agenda

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Imagine going to work with your gas tank or Metro card nearly empty, knowing that you're relying on tips just to get yourself home. Or perhaps, that you're hoping to pick up groceries or birth control on the way home—but only if your tips are enough to cover them. For tipped workers in Washington, D.C., these kinds of difficult decisions are part of everyday life.

Here in one of the most expensive cities in the country, fair wages can make the all the difference. Fair wages can make the difference between making rent or risking eviction. The difference between being able to pay the bills or coming up short. The difference between being able to afford health care or going without.

I'm fighting for fair wages for tipped workers because I'm an advocate for reproductive justice. Reproductive justice includes the idea that each of us must be able to plan our parenting and to parent in environments free from economic and racial oppression. That means being able to prevent or end a pregnancy if we choose, and also to raise children who are healthy, have economic opportunity, and can live free from violence.

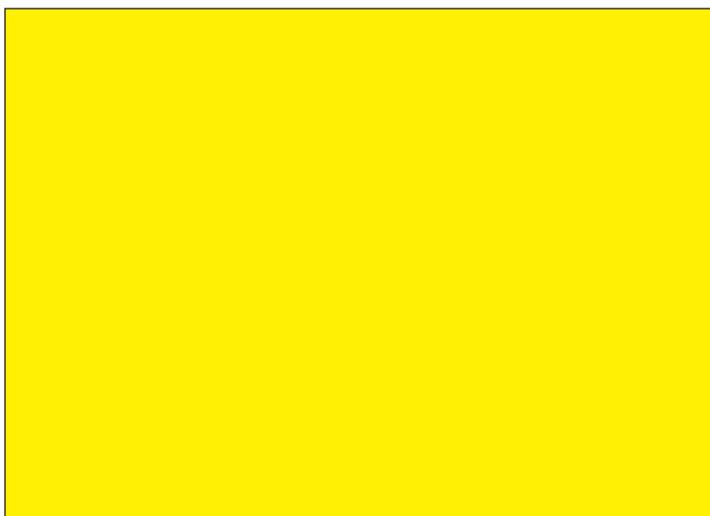
For women who are struggling to make ends meet, being paid a fair wage can transform decisions about pregnancy, children, and family. When tipped workers can barely put away savings, an unexpected pregnancy can mean the difference between poverty and getting by. Think about it—whether she continues the pregnancy or decides to end it, a woman can face impossible barriers. This is particularly tough in D.C., where Medicaid insurance is banned by Congress from covering abortion care. Ultimately, restricting Medicaid coverage of abortion forces one in four poor women seeking an abortion to carry an unintended pregnancy to term.

Women who are tipped workers are twice as likely to be poor as their male counterparts. They are more vulnerable to sexual harassment from managers and customers alike – when they are forced to rely on “good” schedules, table sections, and other factors controlled by their bosses to ensure they can make enough money, and on the generosity of customers whose behavior can range from disrespectful to dangerous.

In addition to gender inequality, racism also comes into play. Black tipped workers generally receive fewer and smaller tips overall. The result? For tipped workers, especially for Black women who are tipped workers, tips just don't cut it.

In a few weeks, D.C. voters will have the opportunity to correct an injustice disproportionately affecting women and people of color across the city by raising the minimum wage for tipped workers to what it is for everyone else: \$15/hour – one fair wage for all with tips on top. I believe that fair wages, decent working conditions, and access to reproductive health care all help ensure that each of us can be healthy and live with dignity.

I'll be voting yes on 77 on June 19th because I want every woman and family in D.C. to have a fair shot. One fair wage would be an important step in that direction and send the clear message that everyone's work is valued and everyone's worth is recognized. Join me.



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