

My name is Wade Luneburg, Political Director of UNITE HERE Local 17. We represent workers in the Twin Cities Convention Centers, Major Sports Facilities, workers at MSP Intl. Airport in In-Flight Catering and Concessions and in Union Hotels across the metro and Rochester.

Today, I ask that you consider this important provision on behalf of some of St. Paul's most vulnerable residents and workers who lost their livelihoods through no fault of their own during this scourge of COVID 19.

I can think of no industry of workers that has been more impacted by continued joblessness than those in Hospitality since the onset of the pandemic.

While there are parts of the industry, particularly the restaurant sector, that has a brighter future ahead we continue to see chronic lay-offs and separations in our events and accommodations sector across Minnesota, with projections of a very long road to a full recovery, stretching into 2023.

Equally damaging to the same workers is the impact on women and our BIPOC communities. Most workers in this part of the industry are women and people of color.

At Minnesota's largest hotel, 69% of regular, fulltime employees who were furloughed in 2020 were people of color.

In the City of St. Paul, its premiere hotel property experienced an 84% loss of its workforce, again impacting a majority women and people of color.

Also impacted were events-based workers in hospitality in the River Centre, Exel Arena, CHS Field, the Ordway campus and Allianz Field who often knit work together between facilities, following the seasons.

Without policy action, workers who lost their jobs through no fault of their own could be left to face a challenging labor market, already rife with racial disparities, and research shows maintaining established employer-employee relationships is critical to the speed of the economic recovery.

The intent of the Hospitality Recall ordinance is to secure a path back to work into jobs that workers knew. It calls on employers AND workers to follow an orderly process that brings back the incumbent workforce first and as business levels allow before hiring new workers, with less experience.

There is no expectation that any given hotel or large venue will need workers back on a certain date, but again, as business levels allow.

The orderly process laid out in the draft ordinance will set the table to bring workers back to the work and careers they knew before COVID, leading to a faster economic recovery for them and for the City of St. Paul and surrounding communities where other hospitality workers reside.

If I may convey one story from a hotel worker and St. Paul resident, Leona Williams.

“The layoff has been really tough. I have a partner and she is finishing up school and trying to look for a job. We have three kids – one in elementary school, one in middle school and one in high school – and I’ve been the head of household.

There are times when I’m worried. Is my company going to call me back? Or am I going to have to downgrade my job after I’ve put in 6 years of hard work to get to where I’m at? If you find a job that you like, where you can see yourself retiring, where you can see yourself being

part of making a place better, where you can see yourself moving up, it means everything to know that you will be able to work there again.

It would mean everything to me to know that I would be able to return to my job when business comes back. I like to learn, be with people, talk to people, help others.

I like the community at my hotel. I like the people who travel there for business. I like my coworkers that come from all different countries. We have a group that works well together, we understand each other. I want to get back to them, I miss them, it's family and it's my work."

Councilmembers, what I do know about this industry and the people that work in it is that they are both incredibly resilient. They want to go back to the work they know and the livelihood's they built for themselves and their families.

Again, I thank you for your serious consideration to this draft ordinance and for your leadership in these difficult times we've all experienced.