



**RESTAURANT
OPPORTUNITIES
CENTERS UNITED**

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Councilmember Dai Thao, Ward 1
Councilmember Rebecca Noecker, Ward 2
Councilmember Chris Tolbert, Ward 3
Councilmember Mitra Jalali Nelson, Ward 4
Councilmember Amy Brendmoen, Ward 5 and Council President
Councilmember Dan Bostrom, Ward 6
Councilmember Jane L. Prince, Ward 7

November 7, 2018

Dear Councilmembers,

Please allow me to introduce myself. My name is Saru Jayaraman; I am the Director of the Food Labor Research Center at the University of California, Berkeley, and the President and co-founder of the Restaurant Opportunities Centers United (ROC-United), an organization of restaurant workers, employers, and consumers from across the country united to improve wages and working conditions for workers in the restaurant industry. ROC has been fighting for One Fair Wage - raising the minimum wage for all workers, including tipped workers. Tipped workers are in large majority (70%) women who report the highest levels of sexual harassment of any industry because they must tolerate inappropriate customer behavior to feed their families in tips. Our research shows that when women tipped workers receive a subminimum wage - as they do in other states with far less successful restaurant industries than Minnesota's - and are forced to live on tips to subsidize a portion of their base wage, their experience of sexual harassment doubles, because they are more dependent on tolerating customer harassment to earn their wage partially in tips. Our research on sexual harassment and the subminimum wage was elevated with #MeToo and Times Up, with 400 media hits and recognition at the Golden Globes, which I attended with actress Amy Poehler to speak out against sexual harassment in the restaurant industry with Times Up. Since then, about 25 celebrities have worked with us to further elevate these issues.

In Minnesota, which has had One Fair Wage for tipped and non tipped workers for decades - and thus has enjoyed half the rate of sexual harassment in the restaurant industry - our members are your constituents. Tipped workers work and live in your wards and they have gathered over 1000 petitions calling on you to protect and raise wages in St. Paul.

I've been following the fight to protect One Fair Wage and pass a \$15 minimum wage in St. Paul closely, and I applaud you for the community process you have created to understand the issue. I was thus troubled to see an article yesterday that revealed that corporate lobbyists have claimed support from St. Paul City Councilmembers for subminimum wage for tipped workers, despite every step of the community process showing the need for One Fair Wage.

We have published more than 50 reports and 3 books on the issue, including the data on tipped workers in Minnesota. It is clear that the restaurant industry in Minnesota, and in St. Paul, has thrived under One Fair Wage. The industry has continued to show strong growth as the minimum wage has risen substantially at the state-level. Workers in St. Paul are lucky: when looking at employment and establishment growth in neighboring states with a subminimum wage for tipped workers, their restaurant industries, and most importantly the people who tirelessly work and support those industries, fare much worse. ¹

Tipped workers from all over the country are moving forward to abolish the subminimum wage - One Fair Wage passed in Michigan in September, in Flagstaff, AZ in November, and is likely to pass in New York very soon. Every time the issue is presented to voters in any state, voters overwhelmingly approve it. One Fair Wage is being introduced in 12 states in 2019 and by Democrats in the US House of Representatives in the first 100 days of the new Congressional session. All of these elected officials look to Minnesota, specifically the Twin Cities, as a positive example of fair wages without exception and a strong restaurant industry. Rolling back these high standards in St. Paul would set a dangerous precedent for workers here and all over the country. The hundreds of donors and celebrities, and most importantly, the thousands of restaurant workers and employers, who work with us are watching what happens in St. Paul. **We are counting on St. Paul to not regress away from One Fair Wage when the rest of the country is advancing toward One Fair Wage.**

Thank you for doing the right thing and passing a \$15 minimum wage that includes all workers, including tipped workers.

Thank you,



Saru Jayaraman

¹ Restaurant Opportunities Centers United 2018. Minnesota's Restaurant Industry is Thriving