

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

July 7, 2022

President Joseph R. Biden
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President,

Thank you for advocating for an end to the subminimum wage for tipped workers and for a \$15 minimum wage. From embracing unionization efforts to implementing policies that move our country toward full-employment – we admire and value the leadership your administration has shown on labor issues. We are writing to you during a crucial moment in which millions of workers¹ are no longer willing to work for poverty and subminimum wages, thousands of small and medium-sized businesses are raising wages to recruit staff, and the policy landscape to heed your call to raise the minimum wage and end the subminimum wage for tipped workers is more favorable than it has ever been. At this crucial moment, we write to ask you to support the broad adoption of High Road Kitchens, a program that has been shown to increase wages for restaurant workers while maintaining restaurant profitability across multiple states and localities.

High Road Kitchens is a public-private partnership program in which struggling restaurants are given recognition, funding, and training if they commit to raising wages and increasing equity for their employees. Employers receive technical assistance and a three-part training on how to raise wages profitably, increase race and gender equity in their hiring and promotion practices, and ways of providing professional advancement for their employees. States and localities use philanthropic funds along with underutilized funds from the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), CARES Act, and American Rescue Plan (ARP) to pay for the program.

The High Road Kitchens program was developed in 2020 by California Secretary of Labor Julie Su, now United States Deputy Secretary of Labor, California Governor Gavin Newsom, and One Fair Wage, a national organization of 270,000 restaurant and service workers and 2,000 restaurant owners. Since its inception, the program has been implemented in three states – California, Michigan, and West Virginia – and three cities – Chicago, New York, and Boston. In Boston the program was implemented under the leadership of Mayor Marty Walsh, now United States Secretary of Labor. In total, \$7 million has gone to 300 restaurants that raised wages. Ultimately, these restaurant owners became advocates for policy change to raise the minimum wage and end the subminimum wage for tipped workers. The program has been hailed for its effectiveness by the Brookings Institute² and in case studies conducted on its success in New York³ and Boston⁴.

1 Rosenberg, Eli. “A Record 4.5 Million Workers Quit or Changed Jobs in November.” Washington Post, 4 Jan. 2022, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2022/01/04/job-quits-november-2021/>.

2 Dinkins, Reniya, and Annelies Goger. “Putting Idle Restaurants to Use by Fighting Food Insecurity and Creating a More Equitable Workplace in California.” Brookings, Brookings, 11 Feb. 2021, <https://www.brookings.edu/research/putting-idle-restaurants-to-use-by-fighting-food-insecurity-and-creating-a-more-equitable-workplace-in-california/>.

3 NYC Opportunity. “The Restaurant Revitalization Program: Helping the Restaurant Industry in the Age of Covid-19 and...” *Medium*, 24 Mar. 2021, <https://medium.com/nyc-opportunity/the-restaurant-revitalization-program-helping-the-restaurant-industry-in-the-age-of-covid-19-and-1d4556cf71ad>.


4 Edwards, Lydia. “A New Equitable Business Model for the Restaurant Industry.” Dare to Reimagine, Dare to Reimagine, 27 Jan. 2021, <https://www.daretoreimagine.org/case-studies/boston-equitable-business-model>.

We ask that your administration encourage the national expansion of the High Road Kitchens program by:

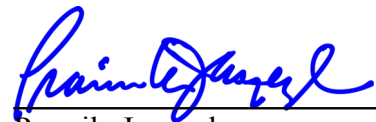
1. Educating states and localities about the program and its benefits;
2. Encouraging and supporting states and localities to use WIOA, ARP, or other dollars to support participating restaurants;
3. Meeting and working with philanthropic leaders, many of whom supported the program in various states and who are now eager to partner with the Biden Administration on this program, about the possibility of matching states and localities' public dollars with philanthropic contributions; and
4. Recognizing restaurants that participate in the program and raise wages and equity for their employees in response to the staffing crisis, thus incentivizing other restaurants to follow suit.

These actions will help support a shift in the restaurant industry toward higher wages and more equitable practices. Your strong fiscal policies have resulted in 3.6 percent unemployment – the lowest level since the pandemic started – and provide us with an opportunity to push for wage increases across multiple sectors, including the restaurant industry. We urge you to use this moment of near full-employment to support programs and policies that result in wage increases for workers. We believe the High Road Kitchens program can spur higher wages for restaurant workers and serve as a catalyst for similar changes in other low-wage sectors.

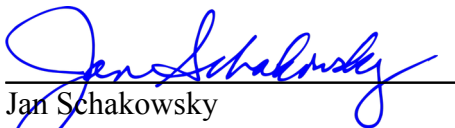
Sincerely,



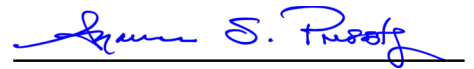
Nydia M. Velázquez
Member of Congress



Pramila Jayapal
Member of Congress



Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress



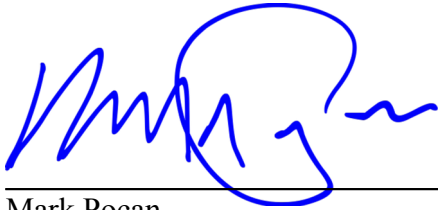
Ayanna Pressley
Member of Congress



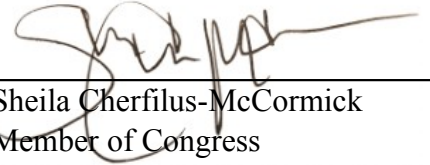
Sheria Jackson Lee
Member of Congress



Carolyn B. Maloney
Member of Congress



Mark Pocan
Member of Congress



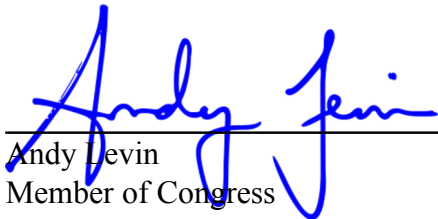
Sheila Cherfilus-McCormick
Member of Congress



Mark DeSaulnier
Member of Congress



Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress



Andy Levin
Member of Congress



Raúl M. Grijalva
Member of Congress



MARK TAKANO
Member of Congress



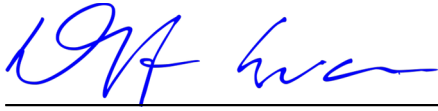
Danny K. Davis
Member of Congress



Marie Newman
Member of Congress



Jamaal Bowman, Ed.D.
Member of Congress



Dwight Evans
Member of Congress

- CC: US Secretary of Labor Marty Walsh
- CC: DOL Deputy Secretary Julie Su
- CC: Esteemed New York Governor Kathy Hochul
- CC: Esteemed Illinois Governor J. B. Pritzker
- CC: Esteemed Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer
- CC: Esteemed Maine Governor Janet Mills
- CC: Esteemed California Governor Gavin Newsom