



Testimony from Alexandra Sanjuan (516.406.4850) Raising the Minimum Wage for Tipped Workers

My name is Alexandra Sanjuan. I'm a Latin American immigrant and a single mother of two. I arrived in this country in 1998 and I started working in restaurants to provide for my family and myself. I have now been working as a waitress for 16 years. I live in Long Island, where the cost of living is very high and it's even harder working as a waitress because your weekly paycheck is so small and tips are not stable. Sometimes you manage to make decent tips, but sometimes you go home at the end of the night with \$10. And many times restaurants don't even pay you the \$5/hour required by law.

For restaurant workers who are breadwinners for our families, if we were paid a base salary of \$8/hour, we would at least have the security of receiving the same minimum wage that is required by state law for all other workers. This would make it easier for us to provide for our families, independent of whether we make enough in tips or not.

It's hard enough trying to earn enough as a waitress, but I have suffered from discrimination and sexual harassment because I am a Latina immigrant woman in a space generally managed by men. Many times we are not given the busiest shifts, where we would have a better chance of earning more tips. We are only given the lunch hour shifts and a few hours during the week. And it has not been uncommon – throughout the last 16 years working as a waitress – that I have received less than \$200 dollars in salary and tips, after a full week of work.

Many times I have been sent back home when I got to work and there were not enough reservations made that day, and instead of earning money that day, I lost the money I spent on transportation. In other places, such as catering halls, the workers often don't receive any of the 18% gratuities that they charge automatically.

I am here today to ask the Wage Board to please take into consideration the reality for tipped workers and our families. We work for extremely low wages because supposedly the money we receive in tips will make up the difference and we'll earn the minimum wage or even higher. But in all the years that I've been working as a waitress in this country, I have never had an employer or restaurant owner compensate my salary if I didn't make enough tips that day to earn the minimum wage.

It's time to fix this broken system and guarantee that restaurant workers have the same minimum wage as other workers. Thank you. ✓

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