

Mr. Michael Sullivan  
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Good Day Mr. Governor,

I wish to briefly discuss minimum wage and tipped wage with you. I own a small restaurant named Hill Top Inn in Elmira. My family has operated this restaurant in the twin tiers for 81 years. This year is one of the most challenging that I have experienced in my 25 years as operator of our business. Our comp insurance is up 23%, our unemployment insurance is up, and increases in the minimum wage continue to hang over us as we employ so many entry-level employees.

As you may know, the restaurant industry is one of the leading entry-level job producers in the country. We employ a significant number of first time employees that are in need of basic job skills and lessons in responsibility. Many of these first timers are teenagers who live at home under their parents roof. They do not need or deserve a "living wage" at this age and level of skill. I ask that you consider implementing a wage level that will allow for these young students to enter the workforce and learn these basic skills while not hindering the businesses that are training our youth.

In regards to tipped wages, our tipped staff are currently the highest hourly wage earners in our business and thus also contribute the most in employment taxes to the state. (As such a high percentage of our business is now via credit card, there is barely an argument of unclaimed tips as such a great portion are automatically claimed for the employee through the use of POS systems such as we have.)

You may be familiar with restaurants that are no longer allowing tipping within their establishments- paying their staff an hourly wage and rolling up their prices to reflect that increase. It is my belief that if the tip credit were eliminated or the tipped minimum wage was raised significantly, that perhaps a great number of restaurants would move to this type of employment. I can assure you that in the case of my establishment, this would result in lower wages for our employees as we will be limited as to what we can afford to pay our employees.

Sales tax revenues are down for the first five months of this year. Expendable income has been reduced and the people of New York don't have the additional dollars to eat out, travel, or even purchase necessities.

The market determines that to attract the best employees, I must pay them a fair and reasonable wage. The lack of a training or youth wage, and now the discussion of increasing the tipped minimum wage will severely hamper my business.

This wonderful establishment has been in my family for three generations. With the current path we are on, I will not allow it to go to the fourth. I would never wish this business climate on my children and will leave this state before allowing them to do so.

Sincerely,

Michael Sullivan  
President  
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