

March 22, 2021

Dear President Biden, Senate Majority Leader Schumer, and Speaker Pelosi,

We are women leaders and leaders of organizations representing and serving millions of women, transgender and nonbinary individuals, and others across the country. Thank you for your commitment to gender justice issues in the two months since you've assumed leadership. The historic COVID relief package will support millions of women and others in America and our communities recognize the important work you did to make that happen.

We also want to thank you for prioritizing raising the minimum wage to uplift millions of women and their families and reduce the gender pay gap. We understand that negotiations will have to occur to get the minimum wage bill across the finish line. We write now to urge you to not compromise for anything less than 100% of the full minimum wage for tipped workers, because anything less than a full minimum wage with tips on top will perpetuate gender and racial pay disparities and [a sexual harassment rate in the restaurant industry](#) that is higher than all others.

**The subminimum wage for tipped workers is a legacy of slavery that exacerbates gender pay inequity and devalues women's work.** Among the millions of tipped workers nationwide for whom the federal subminimum wage is still just \$2.13 an hour, [more than two-thirds are women](#), disproportionately women of color. Even before the COVID-19 pandemic and its impacts on the leisure and hospitality industry—[including job loss, reduced hours, and lower tips](#)—the poverty rate for women working as restaurant servers, bartenders and in other tipped jobs was nearly 2.5 times the rate for workers overall. Women in tipped jobs generally are paid less than their male counterparts: [women restaurant servers, for example, typically made just \\$10.96 per hour](#) in 2019, including tips—78% of the \$14.09 typically paid to male servers. This is in part due to women being concentrated in subminimum wage positions and in part because they earn less money in tips than men due to customer bias. And these disparities are larger for many women of color; Black women tipped restaurant workers, for example, are [paid nearly \\$5 per hour less](#), on average, than white men tipped workers.

**The subminimum wage for tipped workers is also the key reason that the restaurant industry has the highest rates of sexual harassment of any industry.** Because they are dependent on customer tips as a portion of their base wage, tipped workers who earn a subminimum wage often feel forced to tolerate inappropriate customer behavior to avoid jeopardizing their income. During the pandemic, as restaurants have reduced capacity and servers have faced declining tips, this power dynamic has grown even more problematic; in one survey, [41% of workers reported a noticeable change in overall levels of unwanted sexualized comments](#) from customers during the pandemic, and hundreds of women reported that male customers asked them to take off their masks to judge their looks and their tips on that basis. But in the seven states that require One Fair Wage—a full minimum wage with tips on top—tipped workers can count on a paycheck from their employers; they are not as reliant on tips alone to feed their families, making them less vulnerable to harassment from customers. In a 2014 survey, tipped workers in the seven One Fair Wage states reported experiencing [half the](#)

[rate of sexual harassment](#) as women in states with the federal subminimum wage for tipped workers of \$2.13 an hour.

**President Biden, Senate Majority Leader Schumer, and Speaker Pelosi, you all have been leaders in addressing gender equity; please work with us to end the subminimum wage for tipped workers, which is the key reason that one of the largest employers of women – the restaurant industry – has such low wages and the highest rates of sexual harassment of any industry.** We are proud to have a President whose signature issue has been ending violence against women, and hope to work with all of you to reduce sexual harassment through the historic Raise the Wage Act. In negotiating over the subminimum wage for tipped workers, we could consider additional, time-limited supports for small businesses in the leisure and hospitality industry, supplementing the new Restaurant Revitalization Fund and other small business assistance, given that both workers and employers in the sector have been hard hit by the pandemic, or even a longer timeline to achieve a full minimum wage. But we cannot allow tipped workers to ultimately earn less than 100% of the wage, even if it takes several years to get there. Allowing employers to pay anything less than the full minimum wage to tipped workers exacerbates crisis-level rates of sexual harassment and gender pay inequity.

We would be happy to discuss this matter with you further. Thank you.

Sincerely,

**Individual Women Leaders**

Gloria Steinem

Jane Fonda

Alyssa Milano

Amy Schumer

Amy Poehler

Sophia Bush

Patricia Arquette

Rosanna Arquette

Lily Tomlin

Rosario Dawson

V (formerly known as Eve Ensler), Vagina Monologues & One Billion Rising

Mira Sorvino

Alyssa Mastromonaco

Heather Booth

Sally Kohn

Heidi Hartmann, economist

Tina Tchen, President, TIME'S UP NOW

Valerie Jarrett, United State of Women

Vicki Shabo, Better Life Lab at New America\*

Judith Lichtman, Board Chair, Leadership Conference for Civil and Human Rights\*

Julianne Zimmerman, Reinventure Capital\*

## **National Organizations**

Saru Jayaraman, One Fair Wage  
Noreen Farrell, Equal Rights Advocates  
Shannon Williams, Equal Pay Today  
Mary Kay Henry, SEIU International  
Shaunna Thomas, Ultraviolet  
Jordan Brooks, United State of Women  
Rachel Carmona, Women's March  
Fatima Goss Graves, National Women's Law Center  
Aimee Allison, She the People  
Esta Soler, Futures Without Violence  
Kristin Rowe-Finkbeiner, Moms Rising  
Tanya Wallace-Gobern, National Black Workers Center Project  
Joi Cheney, National Urban League  
Debra L. Ness, National Partnership for Women and Families  
Angela Glover-Blackwell, Policy Link  
Maya Rokey Moore Cummings, Ph.D., Global Policy Solutions, LLC  
Reshma Saujani, Girls Who Code  
Teresa Younger, Ms. Foundation for Women  
Rebecca Dixon, National Employment Law Project  
Bree Carlson, People's Action  
C. Nicole Mason, Institute for Women's Policy Research  
Terri Poore, National Alliance to End Sexual Violence  
Katherine Spillar, Feminist Majority Foundation  
Ankita Kanakadandila, TIME'S UP NOW  
Dina Bakst and Sherry Liewant, A Better Balance  
Nancy Trevino, Presente.org  
Cindy Wiesner, Grassroots Global Justice Alliance  
Dara Baldwin, Center for Disability Rights  
Amanda Brown Lierman, Supermajority  
Heather McCulloch, Closing the Women's Wealth Gap  
Jeanie Chunn, Seattle Restaurants United & RAISE High Road Restaurants  
Tiffany Dufu, The Cru  
Susan Celia Swan, V-Day  
Wanda Hammoud, Sisters for Justice, 178,000 Strong  
Susan McPherson, McPherson Strategies  
Rachel Green, Women of Color Coalition  
Emily May, Hollaback  
Dee Poku, The WIE Suite  
Carrie Barnes, ELISE Communications  
Jeannette Pai-Espinosa, National Crittenton  
Meredith Jacobs, Jewish Women International (JWI)  
Maria Dowd, My Money LYFE

Corinne Roller, PL + US: Paid Leave for the United States  
Anne Price, Insight Center for Community Economic Development  
Elizabeth Alex, CASA & CASA in Action  
Stosh Cotler, Bend the Arc: Jewish Action  
Sheila Katz, National Council of Jewish Women  
Deborah J. Vagins, National Network to End Domestic Violence  
Seher Khawaja, Legal Momentum, The Women's Legal Defense and Education Fund  
Margarida Jorge, Health Care for America Now  
Mónica Ramírez, Justice for Migrant Women  
Silvia Henriquez, All\* Above All Action Fund  
Sade Moonsammy, Family Values at Work  
Carole Bernard, Workplace Fairness  
Debra Gore-Mann, The Greenlining Institute  
Madeline Janis, Jobs to Move America  
Marielena Hincapie, National Immigration Law Center  
Melanie Campbell, Convener, Black Women's Roundtable  
Kasey Edwards, Founder/CEO, Helpr  
Soraya Chemaly, The Representation Project

### **State Based Organizations**

Deborah Axt, Make the Road New York (NY)  
Beverly Neufeld, PowHer (NY)  
Ana L Oliveira, New York Women's Foundation (NY)  
Joanne Smith, Girls for Gender Equity (NY)  
Allegra L. Fishel, Gender Equality Law Center (NY)  
Amy Halsted, Maine People's Alliance (ME)  
Asma Elhuni, Rights & Democracy (NH)  
Alejandra Gomez, LUCHA (AZ)  
Karina Ruiz de Diaz, Arizona Dream Act Coalition (AZ)  
Terrelene G. Massey, *Esq.*, Southwest Women's Law Center (NM)  
April Verrett, SEIU 2015 (CA)  
Surina Khan, Women's Foundation of California (CA)  
Eva Patterson, Equal Justice Society (CA)  
Joan Graff, Legal Aid at Work (CA)  
Betsy Butler, California Women's Law Center (CA)  
Emily Timm, Workers Defense Action Fund (TX)  
Terry Fromson, Women's Law Project (PA)  
Megan Peterson, Gender Justice (MN)  
Ann Warner, Women's Rights & Empowerment Network (SC)  
Cassandra Welchlin, Mississippi Black Women's Roundtable & Mississippi Women's Economic Security Initiative (MS)  
Sangita Kumar, Be The Change & Oakland Freedom Theater (CA)  
Michele Hamilton, Pear Tree Community School (CA)  
Andrea Luqetta, CA Asset Building Coalition (CA)

Marisol Turinico, Employee Rights Center (CA)  
Courtney Chappell, Legal Voice (WA)  
Felicia Davis, Chicago Foundation for Women (IL)  
Kelly Nevins, Women's Fund of Rhode Island (RI)  
Cherita Ellens, Women Employed (IL)  
Pamelya Herndon, KAWH Law Center for Social Justice and Change (NM)  
Allegra L. Fishel, Gender Equality Law Center (NY)

**Women Chefs & Restaurant Owners**

Emily Spetrino, Owner, The Coronado (AZ)  
Danielle Leoni, Owner, The Breadfruit & Rum Bar (AZ)  
Gail Somers, Owner, Yahso Jamaican Grille (NH)  
Brittany Saliwanchik and Carmen Harris, Co-Owners, Magnus on Water (ME)  
Amanda Cohen, Owner, Dirt Candy (NY)  
Maria Simon & Cynthia Shephard, Owners, La Adelita de Woodside Restaurant (NY)  
Kimberly Brianne Alter, Owner, Nightbird (NY)  
Lina Hoshino, Owner, Petaluma Pie Company (NY)  
Elena Barcenos, Owner, Rincon Salvadoreno (NY)  
Yancy Perez, Owner, Barepas (NY)  
Barbara Sibley, Owner, La Palapa (NY)  
Sarah Suarez, Owner, Nick's Luncheonette, LLC, DBA Gaskins (NY)  
Dominique Crenn, Owner, Atelier Crenn (CA)  
Yuka Loroi, Owner, Cassava Restaurant (CA)  
Caroline Styne, Owner, Lucques Group (CA)  
Nina Compton, Owner, Compere Leten (LA)  
Katie Button, Owner, Katie Button Restaurants (NC)  
Rocio Meza, Owner, Rocio's Mexican Restaurant (OR)  
Laura Valle, Owner, Salsa's Grill (IL)  
Diane M. Honeyman, Owner, Windy City Cafe (IL)  
Heather Mojer, Owner, Big Dipper Hospitality Group (MA)  
Cheetie Kumar, Owner, Garland Restaurant (NC)  
Anne Peloquin, Vice President & Regional Chef, Levy Restaurants (IL)  
Marianne Ide, Owner, Smith Restaurant (WA)  
Heather Chitty, Owner, Madres Kitchen (WA)  
Allison Fong, Owner, Bon Me (MA)  
Irene Li, Owner, Mei Mei Restaurant (MA)  
Constance Simms-Kincaid, Owner, 5 Loaves Eatery (IL)  
Emily Crawford Dann, Owner, The Corson Building (WA)  
Valerie Anne Ward, Owner, Good Work Austin (TX)  
Caroline Glover, Owner, Annette (CO)

\*for identification purposes only