

To: Governor Gretchen Whitmer, Senate Majority Leader Winnie Brinks, and Members of the Michigan Senate Democratic Caucus

Dear Governor Whitmer and Democratic Leaders,

We are Morris Pearl, Chair of Patriotic Millionaires and a former Managing Director at BlackRock, and Cat Hadley, Director of Partnerships at Patriotic Millionaires and a lifelong Michigan resident. Together, we represent a growing coalition of high-net-worth individuals and economic justice advocates committed to ensuring that the wealthy pay their fair share in taxes and that all workers earn a living wage.

We are writing today out of grave concern over the proposed legislation that threatens to undo the progress made by the One Fair Wage and Paid Sick Leave laws. This legislation would not only harm Michigan's working families but also betray the trust of the voters who overwhelmingly supported these measures. As advocates for fair economic policies, we believe that ensuring a living wage for all workers is critical to the health of Michigan's economy and the future of its workforce.

On July 31, 2024, the Michigan Supreme Court upheld the will of the people by enacting the One Fair Wage ballot measure. This law raised wages for millions of workers to \$15 an hour and ended the unjust subminimum wage for tipped workers—finally addressing a cruel legacy rooted in slavery. For the first time in generations, tipped workers, many of whom are women and people of color, could envision a future with financial security and dignity.

But now, less than six months later, the Senate has introduced a bill to gut this progress, proposing that employers be allowed to use over \$7 per hour of the employees tips to reduce the wages that they pay to their employees (to \$4.74 per hour).. Even more troubling, Senate leadership has signaled a willingness to “deal” on this issue, despite repeated assurances that no such rollback would be considered.

Let us be clear: rolling back these wage increases is not just bad policy—it would be a betrayal of Michigan's working families and the will of the voters.

Here's what's at stake:

- **Cost of living and jobs with fair wages are voters' top concerns.** Every exit poll from recent elections confirms this. Democrats failed to fully communicate that they would address these issues in the last election, and this is our chance to prove otherwise.
- **One Fair Wage was a monumental achievement.** It positioned Michigan as a leader in addressing economic inequality and righting a historical wrong. Rolling back these laws would turn our victory into a bitter defeat and demoralize the very voters who put Democrats in office.
- **Voters will not forget if their will is ignored.** Rolling back these laws sends a dangerous message to voters that their voices do not matter. The AFL has issued a public statement that they will issue a *lifelong scorecard* on any Democrat who reverses the worker wins. We've already seen what happens when working families feel abandoned by those they elect: they stay home on Election Day. Michigan Democrats cannot afford to lose the trust of working people—not in this state, not in this political climate, and not with the 2026 elections around the corner.

- **Tipped workers deserve justice, not compromise.** These workers have endured decades of exclusion from fair wage policies. Rolling back their wages perpetuates the idea that Democrats prioritize big business over working people—a perception we cannot afford to fuel.
- **Raising workers’ wages is a win for everyone, including businesses and the broader economy.** The millionaire members of my organization, Patriotic Millionaires, are quick to stress that they support raising workers’ wages not only out of the goodness of their hearts, but because studies show that it’s what’s best for their bottom lines as well. If you care about ensuring the strength of the broader economy, honoring the will of voters and rejecting any and all rollbacks is the way to go.

The Patriotic Millionaires stand ready to enthusiastically support One Fair Wage in pursuing a referendum if this bill moves forward, but we truly hope the Michigan Democratic Senate will reject this legislation.

The upcoming National DNC Chair Candidate Forum in Detroit is a pivotal moment. It’s an opportunity for Michigan Democrats to send a loud and clear message: we stand with working families, and we will not waver in our commitment to delivering living wages and economic fairness.

Governor Whitmer, Majority Leader Brinks, and Michigan Democrats—the path forward is clear. Stand firm. Reject any rollback of wages or paid sick leave. Show the nation that Michigan Democrats are the party of progress, the party that listens to and fights for working people, and the party that honors the will of the voters.

This is not just about policy—it’s about trust. Michigan’s working families are counting on you. If you fight for them, they’ll fight for you in return.

Sincerely,

Morris Pearl
Chair of Patriotic Millionaires

Catherine Hadley
Director of Partnerships, Patriotic Millionaires