

Assembly Bill 572

High Road Restaurants: Racial and Gender Equity in the Workplace

Assembly Member Ash Kalra

SUMMARY

AB 572 will direct the California Workforce Development Board (CWDB) to establish a program to train restaurant employees, managers, and employers to identify and address disparities in their workforce, and implement high road employment policies. These policies would promote equity in income and career pathways for people of color, immigrants, women and people who are transgender, nonbinary, or intersex.

BACKGROUND

The past year has been a time of great difficulty and great awakening. Employers and workers within the restaurant industry were hit particularly hard as COVID-19 restrictions made it difficult for many to stay open. Millions of jobs were lost, many owners had to permanently shutter their businesses, and workers have been left for months without work or a safety net.

In the midst of this crisis, racial justice uprisings spurred by the brutal police murder of George Floyd have shone a renewed light on structural racism's stranglehold throughout all of U.S. society, and the restaurant industry is no exception.

Of the more than 13 million restaurant workers in the U.S., the majority are women and a disproportionate number are people of color. Even before the pandemic, the restaurant industry claimed eight of the fifteen lowest paid occupations, with people of color disproportionately occupying lower-paid positions. Additionally, the national wage gap of nearly \$5 an hour between Black women and white men who hold tipped and management positions in the restaurant industry is often the result of hiring discrimination, implicit bias, and occupational segregation in the industry.

CWDB has successfully implemented programs that benefit workers and employers, providing High Road Training Partnerships (HRTTP) in other sectors. For example, the CWDB's HRTTP initiative in hospitality created a training academy which receives funding to pilot career path programming for incumbent hospitality workers, increase recruitment, training, and

hiring support for new and expanding hospitality businesses.

This model, if applied to restaurants can help assess and address workforce segregation and wage inequities in the industry and lead to better hiring, training and promotion policies for all those working in California's restaurants.

SOLUTION

AB 572 will direct the CWDB to issue a competitive bid request for Community Based Organizations (CBOs) to provide education and technical support services that promote equity of income and career pathways in the restaurant industry for the following prioritized groups: people of color, immigrants, women and people who are transgender, nonbinary, or intersex. Qualifying CBOs must have a demonstrated capacity to identify patterns of discrimination in the workplace, a demonstrated history of assisting restaurant employees to redress claims of discrimination, and a demonstrated capacity to develop strategies that promote safe and equitable workplaces.

With these training policies in place, we can start to eradicate racial and gender disparities in the restaurant industry and promote equity among workers.

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