

Statement from members of Raise the Wage Burien:

As members of the “yes” committee for the raise-the-wage initiative, we may be surprising to you when we agree with the business owners who signed this letter. The city, under the leadership of former Mayor Kevin Schilling, Adolfo Bailon, and former city attorney Garmon Newsom II, failed to guide compliance with the voter-approved initiative, which has been law since March 2025. The prior council majority and the city manager wasted public funds on a lawsuit that created confusion. They misled businesses by failing to publish accurate information on the city website. All of this could have been avoided, and public resources could have been saved if they had accepted the will of the voters.

Most importantly, workers could have been taking home bigger paychecks, allowing them to meet basic needs. Who knows how many minimum wage workers faced evictions, experienced food insecurity, or fell prey to predatory lending practices while this wage wasn't being enforced?

We know how hard our small business owners work and how important small businesses are to Burien. We wish the former city manager and council majority had done the right thing and informed businesses of the realities of the new law, helping them to prepare once the initiative passed, rather than sowing confusion and misinformation that may cost these businesses even more in legal fees and back pay, and denied them the opportunity to prepare for implementation.

While the recent updates may feel abrupt, we are grateful that this has finally been rectified and the city's website now provides clear and accurate information for workers and employers. We hope that workers in Burien see their pay raised, their tips and healthcare protected as separate income from their wages, and that the public's resources are not wasted with further legal action.

– Jennifer Fichamba, Kelsey Vanhee, Stephen Lamphear