



Maryland Consumer Rights Coalition

**Testimony to the House Appropriations Committee
HB 214: Higher Education - Collective Bargaining - Graduate Assistants
(Graduate Assistant Collective Bargaining Fairness Act)
Position: Favorable**

January 28, 2020

The Honorable Maggie McIntosh, Chair
House Appropriations Committee
Room 121, HOB
Annapolis, MD 21401
cc: Members, Appropriations Committee

Honorable Chair McIntosh and Members of the Committee:

My name is Dariya Brown and I am the Student Rights Program Manager at Maryland Consumer Rights Coalition (MCRC). I was also a former graduate assistant at the University of Maryland, College Park. I am writing today to testify in support of HB 214.

The Maryland Consumer Rights Coalition (MCRC) is a statewide coalition of individuals and organizations that advances financial justice and economic inclusion for Maryland consumers through research, education, direct service, and advocacy. Our 8,500 supporters include consumer advocates, practitioners, and low-income and working families throughout Maryland.

As a graduate assistant at the University of Maryland, College Park, my contract stated that I was required to work 20 hours/week. However, the duties assigned to me often required me to work well above 20 hours, while being a full-time student and having an internship. In working above 20 hours per week, I did not receive additional compensation or paid leave. My experiences as a graduate assistant were not uncommon. Many other graduate assistants worked above their required hours but were not fairly compensated for their work and lacked the ability to confront university administrators about the challenges they were facing.

MCRC works on college affordability and student loan debt issues. Many graduate students depend upon their assistantships to attend graduate school. Having clear information and clear contracts regarding their assistantships are the cornerstones of making sure graduate students are protected as consumers. That is why we support the ability of graduate students to negotiate for clearer contracts, terms, and conditions of work.

For all these reasons, we support HB 214 and urge a favorable report.

Sincerely,

Dariya Brown
Student Rights Program Manager