

UMBC GRADUATE STUDENT TESTIMONY ON HB214

Adapted by GSA Executive Council on 22 January 2020

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It is our opinion that the proposed right to collective bargaining as it is contained in HB 0214 does not carry the expectation of benefits for GAs at UMBC in excess of the risks that it would have GAs incur. We express this through three main points:

- 1) There is concern that if GAs were to be considered university employees as a result of unionization (or even simply the right to unionize) they will **incur additional fees** including FICA tax—which current graduate assistants are exempt-- and increased out of pocket cost of healthcare premiums. UMBC employees generally pay about 20% of their plan premiums out of their paycheck, whereas departments subsidize that portion for their graduate assistants. It is possible that being conferred the right to collective bargaining, absent actual GA unionization, could also lead to GAs incurring this expense.
- 2) The existing level of flexibility and the mutual investment in the well-being of GAs by the administration and the bodies of graduate student governance at UMBC **are generally functioning well for GAs under Meet and Confer**. We fear losing that relationship once the right to collective bargain is enacted.
- 3) We are unimpressed by the **lack of comprehensive, objective documentation by bill sponsors over the specific implications of the right to unionize and collectively bargain**. Previous iterations of similar bills in prior years have led to a lack of clear communication with UMBC students

The current position of the Graduate Student Association Executive Council at UMBC is that before supporting HB 214, we would need to see more evidence from proponents of the bill to show that the anticipated benefits of collective bargaining are in excess of those provided to us already by Meet and Confer so as to justify UMBC to accept the risks that the bill entails.