

Delores G. Kelley, Chair  
Brian J. Feldman, Vice Chair  
3 East Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, MD 21401

SB 658  
Supporting

Dear Chair Kelley, Vice Chair Feldman, and Members of the Finance Committee,

As a PhD Candidate in the Department of American Studies and Graduate Assistant at University of Maryland, College Park, I am urging you to pass SB 658. We are workers and deserve to be afforded the right to collectively bargain to ensure work with dignity on Maryland's campuses.

UMD promotes itself as a place of "fearless ideas," but the denial of this human right to collectively bargain creates an atmosphere where graduate workers fear speaking up about low-wages, large teaching loads, and unclear and uneven contracts for fear of reprisals. We are officially told that we are not allowed to work outside the university, because our stipends (for the work we do) are granted to us to cover our living expenses so we can focus full-time on our studies. It is never enough. I have always had to work another job to pay my bills and even then I have often had to use credit cards to make up the difference. I am decidedly poorer and more in debt since I came to graduate school. Instead of nurturing the development of emerging scholars and educators, poor working conditions make it challenging for graduate students to focus on their studies. There are wide discrepancies in graduate students' work loads across departments and little transparency around these decisions. In my department, graduate students have often been required to be the primary instructors for undergraduate classes. When graduate students complain about the work-load, we are often told to spend as little time as possible on teaching. This seems incredibly unfair to undergraduate students who are paying and taking out loans to come to Maryland's flagship school to receive what they hope is an excellent education.

SB 658 is not simply about the working conditions of graduate students, but about the educational integrity of UMD. I hope you will seriously consider this matter.

Sincerely,

Ashley Hufnagel  
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