

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,

I am writing to implore you to support SB 658 and grant graduate assistants the right to collectively bargain. As the GSG representative of the interdisciplinary Neuroscience And Cognitive Science (NACS) program, I hear from students from many different departments with different funding situations. However, there is one thread common to everyone - our contracts state that we are being compensated for 20 hours of work a week, while all of us are expected to put in at least 40 and a majority of senior students get closer to 60. At the same time, our mentors rely on us to do our so they can continue to attract external funding (through the Brain and Behavior Initiative Seed Grant program, we brought in \$10 mil on a \$1 mil investment from the university. I can assure you that this 10 to 1 return of investment would not have happened if only professors had done the work.) We recognize that our careers require a serious time commitment, but we should at least be compensated fairly for the effort we put in. Too many people in my program are getting burned out, not because of academic stress, but because they're worried about taking on even more loans to make ends meet even as they're publishing high-impact papers and increasing the prestige of the university.

We need a living wage. We need legal, enforceable contracts. We need guaranteed benefits. We need a third-party grievance policy. And we only ask for the tools needed to attain these basic Guarantees. Passing SB 658 and grating us the right to collectively bargain would allow us at least a modicum of say in how we're treated and compensated, in addition to simply being the fair thing to do.

Sincerely,

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