

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

SB658
Supporting

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

I offer the following testimony in favor of bringing Senate Bill 658 to a vote by this governing body. I am an associate professor and the director of graduate studies in the Department of American Studies at the University of Maryland, College Park. I have worked in these roles since 2012 and 2017, respectively. Prior to that, I was a doctoral student in American Studies at New York University for seven years. I am also a scholar with award-winning expertise in the subjects of work and labor.

Together, these experiences have made abundantly clear to me that graduate student employees at public and private institutions alike are not only justified in their fight for collective bargaining rights and unionization, they also deserve it.

Members of the Senate Finance Committee, if you agree that the state of Maryland has an obligation to provide a quality education to taxpayers, then by necessity you agree with the need for workers to provide that education. Without graduate student teachers and teaching assistants, my department would simply not have enough instructors to teach the classes we provide to our academic majors and UMD students as a whole, as part of their general education requirements.

Many detractors will argue that it makes no sense for graduate students to have “industrial” relations with a university, given that students are receiving scholarly, research, and classroom training as a result of their enrollment. Many will also argue that this education and opportunity is a significant part of graduate students’ “compensation,” along with tuition remission, healthcare, and a stipend for living.

However, such arguments overlook the absolutely indispensable work graduate students do as teachers, teaching assistants, and research assistants. They also fail to see how two statements can be true at the same time: graduate students are professionals in training *and* employees of the university. Their research and teaching fulfill personal and professional goals *and* the goals of the institution. The tangible aspects of their employment cannot be ignored, including the amounts they are paid per academic year (roughly \$19,000 in my department), the number of hours they work, and the challenges they face in shaping the conditions and expectations of their labor on campus.

It is my firm belief that graduate students should have the ability to collectively bargain over the conditions and compensations of their labor and that a union of graduate students should be recognized by the institution and the state. In an effort to make this a reality, I ask that you bring SB658 to a vote.

Sincerely,

Jan M. Padios
PhD, Department of American Studies
Associate Professor and Director of Graduate Studies
1328D Tawes Hall
7751 Alumni Drive
University of Maryland, College Park
College Park, Maryland 20742