

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

SB 658  
Supporting



## GRADUATE STUDENT ASSOCIATION

Student Center, Room 3006  
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Dear Chair Kelley, Vice Chair Feldman, and Members of the Finance Committee,

Thank you very much for affording us the opportunity to write today. As the President of the Graduate Student Association at Bowie State University, I work very closely with the Graduate Program Coordinators and the Graduate Assistants. I am aware of the work they do and their concerns. On behalf of my constituency, I must stand united with students from other University System of Maryland institutions who are in front of you today to urge you to send this bill to the full House of Delegates for consideration.

In August 2016, the National Labor Relations Board ruled that, “student assistants who perform work at the direction of their university for which they are compensated are statutory employees.” It extended collective bargaining rights to all private institutions, and now private institutions in our own region—MCAD, Georgetown, George Washington, and American—are organizing and, in some cases, filing paperwork. These institutions having collective bargaining rights threatens all of our institutions, but is even greater for a small Historically Black College or University such as Bowie State University. To remain competitive and attract the high quality of graduate students that distinguish our institutions in broader arenas, this bill is very crucial to us and we need it now.

Graduate assistants receive mandates and expectations that align with employee expectations and yet very few of the safeguards that employees rely on and need are extended, specifically with respect to compensation. The expectation of our institution is that graduate assistants have no additional employment that would interfere with their availability to the University staff and faculty as GAs. Yet, with compensation below the poverty rate at approximately \$7,700 per year, it is impossible to successfully live and function without assuming debt. Surely allowing GAs to negotiate with the university will allow for more fruitful dialogue and movement toward a more successful Graduate Assistant and University collaboration.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I sincerely hope that you will allow this bill to be considered by the full House of Delegates.

Sincerely,  
Donovan Griffin-Blake  
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