

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 the President and Vice President of Government Affairs for the Graduate Student Government at the University of Maryland, College Park (UMCP), we strongly urge you to support HB 214/SB 658. For the fourth year in a row, our graduate governance body at UMCP has once again passed a resolution in support of this legislation. With elected representatives from across campus, we represent the voice of 10,000 graduate students, including the 4,400 graduate assistants serving in teaching, research and administrative roles.

Our support for this bill is based on the volume of concerns that have been brought to our attention by graduate students who have felt vulnerable and threatened in the current graduate assistantship environment. Despite proactive engagement with the existing Meet and Confer process, we believe it fundamentally lacks efficacy and protection for graduate students.

Some of the most concerning and frequent problems we hear among GSG constituents relate to graduate assistantships. For example, we have documented complaints about supervisors requiring their graduate assistants to work over the allotted hours on a regular basis and in ways that are not related to their prescribed roles. Further, despite attempts to implement informal statements of mutual expectations, set between a supervisor and graduate assistant, these are neither required nor provide legal protection, as would a contract, if there is a breach of expectation. These problems are detrimental to the entire university community which depends on the significant contributions made by graduate students to keep operations running smoothly from teaching undergraduate courses to aiding in research and supporting student affairs units.

We hope our testimony regarding the deficiencies of the Meet and Confer process at the University of Maryland provides context as to why this bill is so important for protecting the graduate assistants who depend on this work to make their graduate education financially viable.

Again, we are here in our leadership capacity to represent the many graduate students who have come to us asking for support and advocacy. We hope to lift up the voices and experiences of these constituents by asking you to support HB 214/SB 658. This legislation would provide us with a powerful and alternative avenue for addressing the serious employment issues affecting graduate assistants. It should be our *right* to collective bargain if we choose to do so.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Sincerely,

Annie Rappeport  
PhD Candidate, College of Education  
President, Graduate Student Government

Rachel Lamb  
PhD Candidate, Department of Geographical Sciences  
Vice President of Government Affairs

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