

Delores G. Kelley, Chair, 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'm writing this letter in support of SB 658, to allow for collective bargaining for graduate student employees. My name is Cameron Busacca. I am a doctoral student in the International Education Policy program here at the University of Maryland. I have worked in the International Student & Scholar Services Office since 2015, only away for one year between my Masters' and Doctorate program. I have seen the office go through tremendous change, including the implementation of the international student fee. This was implemented to provide better services for international students, and the argument in defense of implementing this fee was to match the standards of other Big Ten schools. Yet, when it comes to matching Big Ten standards on collective bargaining, we fall behind. Are you interested in taking actions which truly benefit the students or actions which only benefit the institution?

I want to speak momentarily about the benefit graduate assistants bring to the ISSS office. The ISSS office advises more international students than most other Big Ten institutions per advisor, meaning that our advisors do not have the time and ability to meet all the needs of the students. As such, we, as graduate assistants in the office, provide a great amount of support and innovation which benefits the international student population. In many instances, we provide innovation to both structural and administrative components, as well as programmatic. I, for one, was grateful to be able to rescue the English Conversation Partners program here at UMD. A program that works towards the university's mission of diversity, internationalization, and cultural engagement in a way that few others on campus do. As a graduate assistant, I have been able to bring theory from my field into praxis in this program.

If you refuse the right to collectively bargain, then you fail to recognize the value we bring to the university. Collective bargaining will allow us to, should we need to, voice our needs, which will *improve* our situation and thus our impact on the university and its community. Unfortunately, more and more universities are run like a business. By allowing us to advocate for our needs as a collective, we will be able to make the university more competitive as an institution, thereby, improving the recruitment of potential talent, and increasing the brand of the university. This is even more true when considering the position of our international graduate students, many of whom need the funding provided by assistantships to study, and even then, struggle. They are captive to the university, since they can not work outside the university. Therefore, if another university, with a lower cost of living, provides more money, it is an easy decision to make. I have seen this time and time again in my office. If you want to increase the draw of UMD nationally and internationally, you will allow graduate students to collectively bargain on their behalf.

Sincerely,

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