

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 express my strongest support of the right of graduate student workers to collectively bargain, and to encourage you to bring Senate Bill 658 to a vote. Graduate student employees at the University of Maryland provide crucial, extensive, and diverse labor in the form of research, teaching, and administrative tasks that are all essential to the operation of this university. The State of Maryland has already recognized the right of other workers at our state university to collectively bargain. The exclusion of workers who are also graduate students is unacceptable, and should be immediately corrected.

The right to collectively bargain is now an established right of graduate student workers in states that are home to the country's top-ranking public research universities – such as California, Michigan, Illinois, Washington, and New Jersey. These universities include existing and aspirational peer institutions for the University of Maryland, as well as fellow members of the Big Ten. They also join many other states, such as Massachusetts, Connecticut, New York, Iowa, Oregon, and our neighboring state of Delaware in recognizing this important right. Leading private elite universities such as Columbia University and New York University also recognize this shared right of *all* private and public sector workers.

At these universities, it has been shown that a recognized and respected work force benefits not only workers but also the educational experience of its students **and** the status of its research record. Indeed, I served for five of the past seven years as Director of Graduate Studies in my department, and we have lost many of our top recruits to our program in favor of those at the University of California, University of Michigan, Rutgers University, and New York University in large part due to the kind of support these schools offer to an organized and recognized graduate student work force. There is no contradiction that graduate students are both students and workers, in this case at the same institution; the contradiction is only that the latter status is denied, eroding the integrity of the university itself.

If the University of Maryland wants to maintain and even improve its status among the ranks of the best universities in this country, it is imperative that it too recognize all of its workers. This is particularly important at this historic moment, in which workers' rights are being put on the line on a federal level. It is crucial that states like Maryland stand up and reiterate their long-standing support for **all** of the people who live and work there, and to provide a strong, forward-thinking model that will continue to demonstrate Maryland's status as a leader. And the next step is to bring SB 658 to a vote. Thank you.

Sincerely,
Christina Hanhardt
Associate Professor, Department of American Studies, University of Maryland
(provided for identification purposes only)