

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 write this letter in full support of SB 658 and strongly encourage all members of the Appropriations committee to vote in support of a bill that would have lasting positive impact for the learning and working environment of Graduate Assistants in the University of Maryland System and thus the broader UM community.

I currently serve as the President of the Department of Women's Studies Graduate Student Association. I enrolled as a doctoral student in the Department of Women's Studies at the University of Maryland in 2016 excited to be a part of a thriving intellectual community. However, since arriving at the University of Maryland, College Park I have personally experienced and witnessed among my beloved colleagues, the everyday challenges of being denied official recognition as UM employees and the right to collectively bargain.

We are left susceptible to workplace exploitation and harassment from our superiors, unclear job expectations, hostile and punitive working conditions, unlivable wages, no sick days/disability leave, and even requirements to pay "student fees" upwards to \$500 (each semester) on our insufficient budgets because we are not recognized as employees and thus denied the right to collectively bargain for our basic employment rights. Currently, we have no official recourse or method by which to be officially acknowledged, make our voices heard or know that our rights will be respected and upheld as vital workers to the UM system community.

I want to be able to work with dignity. Poverty wages do not facilitate dignity. Intimidation, hostility, overwork, and abuse of power in the workplace do not proffer dignity. Unfortunately, these have been my reality as a first generation college graduate and now a doctoral student. I want to be able to offer my students my best however, poverty wages and poor working conditions compromise my quality of life and thus hinder my ability to give my best to my students.

Therefore, I urge the Maryland Legislature and Governor to legalize collective bargaining rights for Maryland graduate employees by passing SB 658.

Sincerely,  
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