

**Written Testimony Submitted to the
Maryland House Appropriations Committee
By Anny Gaul, Assistant Professor of Arabic, University of Maryland, College Park
HB 275
State Personnel – Collective Bargaining – Faculty, Part-Time Faculty, and Graduate
Assistants
February 14, 2023**

FAVORABLE

Good afternoon Chair Barnes, Vice Chair Chang, and members of the House Appropriations Committee. My name is Anny Gaul and I am an Assistant Professor at the University of Maryland, College Park, where I have worked since 2020. I call on this committee to issue a favorable report to HB 275. The state already grants this right towards nearly every other state employee, as well as the faculty at our community colleges and the non-academic workforce at our 4 year institutions. It is clear that this right should be extended to the rest of higher education in Maryland.

I teach classes in advanced Arabic language as well as in the history, politics, and culture of the Arab world. On top of this I regularly publish new research on the Arab world in scholarly journals and engage in public outreach activities; and as a tenure-track faculty member each year I spend in the job, I take on a greater share of responsibility for running the academic programs that I am a part of and serve on faculty committees responsible for the day-to-day running of those programs as a part of my job responsibilities.

In my nearly three years at the university it has become increasingly clear to me that faculty have little to no power when it comes to making financial and budgetary decisions about the programs we are tasked with running, even as our administrative burdens increase. This connects to a number of challenges that could be addressed through a collective bargaining process, including:

- Pay equity: UMD's gender pay gap is the second worst among its peer institutions. As it stands faculty have little to no power to enact policies that address pay equity issues, whether at the department level or at higher levels of the administration. I saw this first hand when I served on the Salary & Merit Committee in my department last year: although the faculty had democratically created and voted to approve a policy addressing pay equity regarding the money we were supposed to allocate at the department level, our ability to actually implement it according to that policy was subject to the permission of administrators who had specific alternative parameters for its allocation.
- Administrative burdens that detract from teaching & research: The number of full-time faculty at UMD has not increased in accordance with increased enrollment since 2016. This means that faculty like myself are increasingly burdened with administrative tasks that take time away from our teaching and research. Meanwhile the number of UMD administrators at the management level has increased significantly -- up 42.4% from

2015 to 2019 and an additional 8.4% from 2020 to 2022, even as office and administrative support staff numbers have declined in the same period. In effect this means that less and less money from the state budget is actually making it to classrooms and to new research. Collective bargaining would empower us with mechanisms to counter this trend.

Bargaining rights would not only improve my working conditions but strengthen my program as a whole, which relies on the labor of a team of absolutely outstanding language instructors working under precarious conditions with no mechanism for safely speaking out, let alone improving those conditions. Improving their job security and working conditions translates into a better education for Maryland students.

Finally, as a graduate student whose colleagues unionized while I was completing my PhD at Georgetown, I saw first hand what a difference the right to collective bargaining made in the lives of graduate student workers and the competitiveness of their programs. Graduate student workers are full-time professionals who teach classes, fulfill key administrative roles, and represent the university and the state when presenting their research. Graduate students who have collective bargaining rights tend to earn better compensation packages with better working conditions than those who do not have those rights, meaning that the work that they do is more likely to be compensated in line with a living wage: the current Georgetown academic year stipend is \$33,814 (attained through a bargained contract) while even with recent COLA increases the equivalent UMD stipend begins at \$24,728. Granting our graduate student workers the right to collective bargaining would ensure we can recruit and retain the best researchers and teachers, and it also makes graduate education more equitable. As it stands currently, these programs are most accessible to those with a family safety net or personal wealth or those who are willing to go into debt to complete their graduate programs. Collective bargaining would make these programs accessible to anyone who is qualified and interested, as a public education ought to be.

Members of the committee: this state has for decades viewed collective bargaining between state employees and management as the best way to enroot democracy in our workplaces and public education institutions. The right to collective bargaining has been long recognized not only as a fundamental human right, but it has also in this state been seen as the best method of ensuring that employee voices play a vital role in constructing conditions that govern our workplaces. It is a right that benefits everyone by extending equity and democratic practices, which should be the priority of any system of public education. It is a right granted to many other public higher ed institutions in the county, and indeed to many private, prestigious institutions in our own state. Universities where faculty have collective bargaining rights, including many of the country's prestigious public research universities, are places where professors are empowered to bargain a contract that reflects the issues that matter most to them—which should be a given at a public institution in a democratic society. The reasons to exempt 4-year public institutions from this fundamental right no longer make sense. I again therefore call for a favorable report to HB 275.