

**Written Testimony Submitted to the
Maryland House Appropriations Committee
By Amir Riyahi, Graduate Assistant
HB 275**

**State Personnel - Collective Bargaining - Faculty, Part-Time Faculty, and Graduate Assistants
February 14, 2023**

FAVORABLE

Dear Chair Barnes, Vice Chair Chang, and Members of the Appropriations Committee,

of the situation grad students like myself are caught in, and in many cases they are too afraid to make themselves heard (either due to the lack of representation or fear of retaliations). Many graduate students would have to endure large lump sums of money when they travel on behalf of the university (on projects budgets which have already been approved and paid to the university) but yet have to incur large sums of debt on their credit cards and apply for a reimbursement, which in many cases could take up to a few months. This in turn worsens a vicious cycle of debt and low and lower credit score, which puts them in even greater financial disadvantage.

I have been awarded a fellowship which does benefit our department, but at the same time the and due to a series of administrative mistakes, have not received any paychecks for an entire month. You can imagine the extend of financial distress that young grad students with very small/non-existent financial buffer could go through if they do not receive the small compensation they are supposed to on a regular basis. Luckily, I have had a supportive advisor who has chosen to lend me some money until the administrative issue is resolved, but I can not simply put this behind me and ignore all the other students who might fall into the same situation and do not receive any support, or in worse scenarios, receive some ill intended monetary support from their advisor, which could put them at extreme exploitation risks.

And this is only the visible side of the story, while ignoring all the individuals who might be too afraid of simply talking about the injustice they may be going through.

Sincerely,
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