

**Written Testimony Submitted to the
Maryland House Appropriations Committee
By Yue Xin, Doctoral Student at UMD**

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 Yue Xin and I am a second year doctoral student in the College of Education, University of Maryland College Park. 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.

Currently I work as a graduate assistant in my department with my advisor. I receive a 20-hour payment every week, which can barely cover my rent and daily expenses. Other PhD students in my research team choose to work overload in order to support their lives. However, as an international student holding an F1 visa, I am not allowed to work overload or receive any other form of payment outside of my 20-hour salary, even if I want to. The research project I am paid for does not align with my research interest perfectly, so I am also actively looking for other research opportunities more suitable for me. But since I cannot receive more payment, I can only work on other projects for course credits in the form of independent study. It has slowed down my coursework progress, which means I need to take at least one more year of courses than other students. Moreover, this summer I am about to start my comprehensive exam, and I have been approved by my advisor to explore a different topic. In that case, next school year I even need to spend more extra time on planning my dissertation work aside from two distinct research projects and two courses.

Under this living situation, it is often hard for me to make ends meet and be 100% focused on my study. As an international student, I already suffer from higher living expenses and limited work and funding opportunities due to visa restrictions. I cannot even think of traveling to academic conferences without departmental funding, let alone visiting my family in my home country. Enacting this bill will largely improve the payment for doctoral students and help alleviate the financial struggles that I and other international doctoral students are facing. By providing fair and adequate compensation, the bill will help ensure that we can focus on our studies and research, and relieve a lot of mental burden for us.

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 granted to many other public higher ed institutions in the county, and indeed to many private, prestigious institutions in our own state. The reasons to exempt 4-year public institutions from this path just no longer make sense. I again therefore call for a favorable report to HB 275.