

**Written Testimony Submitted to the
Maryland House Finance Committee**

By Ryan Conrath, Associate Professor of English, Salisbury University

HB 275

**State Personnel – Collective Bargaining – Faculty, Part-Time Faculty, and Graduate
Assistants**

February 14, 2023

FAVORABLE

Good afternoon Chair Griffith, Vice Chair Klausmeier, and members of the Senate Finance Committee. My name is Ryan Conrath and I am Associate Professor of English at Salisbury University, where I have worked for 5 years. 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 an average of five classes a year at Salisbury University. In addition, I co-edit a journal of adaptation studies housed at SU, chair a committee for faculty professional development funds, and am very engaged in the culture and politics on campus. There's much that I appreciate about working here at SU, but I have encountered issues over the past several years that, on reflection, I know could be addressed through *truly* shared governance, which we simply do not have at our institution. Recently there have been sweeping changes that affect how classes will be categorized under the new general education model. The administration has communicated the urgent expectation that we revise the syllabi for our classes to conform to the new model, which involves a ton of work for each class. For all of this extra work revising syllabi and submitting extensive proposals, there has been no offer of remuneration, and very little transparency as to HOW the many committees and bureaucratic actors evaluate these proposals. This situation reflects much of how things operate at SU between the university leadership and faculty/staff. As another, slightly different example, it was recently announced that we would see a 5% raise due to COLA adjustments, which was supposed to take effect in November of 2022. However, we didn't see the adjustments to our pay until mid-January 2023. I tried to contact Human Resources on multiple occasions and never received a response. I offer these two examples as reflections of a much larger need for truly *shared* governance. At the moment, we only have the "Faculty Senate," which is essentially a large body of my peers beset by bureaucratic bloat with no actual power.

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.