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Environment and Transportation  
Committee

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## THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES

ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

I'm Delegate Linda Foley and I am asking for a favorable report on HB 275, which extends collective bargaining rights to full-time and part-time faculty plus graduate assistants who work at the University System of Maryland, as well as at Morgan State and St. Mary's College of Maryland. In the past, the House passed a bill extending collective bargaining rights to graduate assistants. This time, the bill also includes full-time and part-time faculty.

You'll also recall that in 2021, the legislature voted to allow collective bargaining for academic workers at Maryland's community colleges. That law will fully take effect in 2024. There's no reason for faculty and other academic workers at Maryland's 4-year public colleges and universities not to enjoy the same rights as their counterparts at community colleges. In fact, some part-time faculty teaching at our community colleges also teach the same courses at our 4-year schools.

Meanwhile, graduate assistants in the UMD system have been advocating for the right to bargain for more than 22 years. It's past time to allow graduate assistants, most of whom earn far less than Maryland's livable wage, the right to bargain over their wages, hours and working conditions. Earlier this month, graduate assistants at Johns-Hopkins University voted overwhelmingly for union representation. If collective bargaining rights are good enough for Johns-Hopkins grad assistants, then they are good enough for UMD grad assistants. Likewise, several Maryland private colleges and universities have collective bargaining rights for full-time or part-time faculty, including Goucher College, McDaniel College, the Maryland Institute College of Art and Johns-Hopkins. Nationwide, 24 states have laws that allow faculty at 4-year academic institutions to collectively bargain, including Delaware, Virginia, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York and even Ohio. It's no wonder thousands of full-time and part-time faculties are organizing.

We are all aware of the increasing threat to higher education and academic professions. Without collective bargaining, our UMD System faculty members don't have the protections they need to freely teach the truth without concern of what political backlash will do to their academic freedom, their research and their livelihood.

UMD Administrators will likely tell you that there are already systems in place to address the concerns of faculty and grad assistants. But so-called "shared governance" bodies, such as faculty or university senates, or meet-and-confer procedures are merely advisory and

informative. They do not give academic workers a legal or binding mechanism to enforce any agreements or grievance resolutions. Only collective bargaining can do that.

I've told you what this bill will do for academic workers at our public 4-year colleges and universities. What it will not do, is force them to join a union. Having collective bargaining rights merely gives workers the RIGHT to select a union to represent them. It doesn't mandate or dictate that any union be recognized. Nor does the bill automatically impose a contract on the UMD system. Unionization will occur only if more than half of the workers in a bargaining unit officially sign cards indicating they want a union to represent them.

I'm sure every member of this committee and every one of us in the Maryland General Assembly believes in democracy and fairness. Collective bargaining ensures democracy in the workplace. And democracy through collective bargaining ensures fairness in the workplace. That's all the faculty members and graduate assistants from throughout Maryland who are testifying here today are asking you for. That's more than 2,000 Marylanders who signed petitions are advocating for. They want basic democracy and basic fairness for academic workers in the UMD system.

Our new governor has inspired us with his call to "Leave No One Behind." Thousands of workers at community colleges, private 4-year schools and on campuses all over our state have collective bargaining rights. Please don't leave our faculty and graduate assistants behind. Give HB 275 a favorable vote and help them achieve the same basic rights that the majority of workers in our higher education system enjoy.

Thank you and thanks to the students and faculty members who are standing up for basic democratic rights at work.