

**Written Testimony Submitted to the
Maryland House Appropriations Committee
By Brett Setera, Graduate Assistant
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 Brett Setera and I am a Graduate Research Assistant at the University of Maryland College Park, where I have worked for 3 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.

As a graduate research assistant, I have had the responsibility of being a teaching assistant for an undergraduate course consisting of roughly 50 juniors and seniors on solid state physics for one semester. In my department, every graduate student must perform one semester as a teaching assistant and can be called upon to do it again if needed in addition to devoting time to developing their scientific thesis. Luckily for me, my teaching assistant appointment was for a course that relates to my thesis work and my other work as a research assistant has also helped me move toward achieving a PhD.

While I currently have no complaints about my personal situation as a graduate research assistant within the university system, I cannot idly watch as other graduate students deal with issues that they feel they have no recourse for. There doesn't need to be anything wrong with the system for us to want the right to collectively bargain, as is already granted to many public and private universities across the nation already. It is simply a tool that we can use to improve our working conditions, if need be, by relying on each other instead of relying on our employer/administration. Therefore, I call for a favorable report to HB 275 to help our University of Maryland system be the best that it can be.