

**Written Testimony Submitted to the
Maryland Senate Finance Committee
By Michele M. Mason, Associate Professor**

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 Michele M. Mason and I am an Associate Professor of Japanese Cultural Studies at the University of Maryland, College Park, where I have worked for over 16 years. I call on this committee to issue a favorable report to HB 275. The state already grants this right to 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 three courses a year, sit on numerous committees, am a faculty advisor for UMD's Language House, oversee two student organizations, and liaise with and support the singular Gordon W. Prange Collection of postwar documents from the era of the U.S. occupation of Japan. In recent years, I have become the one tenured faculty member who supports the Korean program, serving as the Faculty Liaison for the Big Ten Academic Alliance's Korean Course-share program, making it possible for our students to take advanced courses on Korean history, literature, poetry, and culture. I am currently the Director of the Japanese Program. In addition to my many administrative tasks connected to this position, I also mentor junior scholars and oversee the language instructors and graduate-student teaching assistants.

Our program would not have the national respect for its rigor and comprehensiveness were it not for our invaluable PTK faculty who came to UMD with Master Degrees and years of teaching experience. They are dedicated well beyond what their salaries' remunerates, taking on all manner of extra committee work for major advising, overseeing the foreign language placement tests, and, in recent years, going above and beyond to prepare brand new curricula, homework, exams, tutorials, and more so that we could adopt a new textbook that was more in keeping with not only our rigorous learning outcomes but also our commitment to having our female students and students of color better represented in the materials.

The COVID 19 pandemic radically altered the fundamental structures and demands on our time. Going above and beyond the extra daily work to retool for online teaching was a heavy burden. In 2020, all of us in the Japanese program rallied to aid students in adapting to the new format

but also care for their bodies and mental health. And still we had a brilliant student die by suicide. At the same time, we have been called on to prepare for a mass shooting events while some of the doors in our building are not hung to be able to barricade the door. The need to support our students in so many new ways has taken a heavy toll on all of us. But now that we can see some movement toward normalcy, the expectations remain as high as when we in the middle of the pandemic. Much of the workload that we willing took on during a time of crisis has been normalized as part of the regular expectations. The situation is unsustainable.

For these many reasons, I urge you to do all you can to help and support those of us who are dedicated to our work and have given so generously in this extremely trying time. The right to collective bargaining has been long recognized not only as a fundamental human right, and in Maryland has clearly 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.

Thank you for your time.
Sincerely,

Michele Mason

Michele M. Mason (She/Her/Hers)
Japanese Program Director
Associate Professor, Japanese Cultural Studies
School of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures
4224 Jimenez Hall
College Park, MD 20742
mmmason@umd.edu (n.b. 3 'm's)