

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

By Sydney Sharpstene

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 Sydney Sharpstene and I am a Full-Time Lecturer at The University of Maryland. 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 a 4-4 schedule (4 classes each semester), but can still barely make ends meet for my family. I rely on teaching in the summer to make ends meet and also have a second job. The average salary of members of Strategic Planning Committee was over \$300,000 last year, yet my salary is \$52,400; why? And why are faculty members not valued for their feedback in committees? In the 16-member search committee for new Dean of Graduate School, includes two faculty members and two students.

I love working here, but conditions are often precarious. Contracts can be given at the last minute, leaving little to no time for preparation. I personally did not have access to the required materials yet on my first day of teaching because I had only been hired for a week. I also did not get to complete new faculty orientation because I was hired too late in the summer.

There are 3,392 full-time PTK faculty at UMD, and many of us in the PTK program can't make ends meet. For instructional PTK like me, a full-time course load is 4-4, double what tenure-track faculty teach. Instructional faculty can earn as little as \$5,000 for a course, roughly what I receive. Many part-time faculty work at a number of different campuses, or multiple jobs just to make ends meet.

Even worse is that PTK faculty do not speak out about work conditions because they fear losing their job. As a result, we lack input from the people teaching most of the credit hours (around 70%) on our campus. Many faculty members lack the resources to serve students: offices and computers; funds for professional development; the ability to buy books. In our department, we don't even have a fully staffed writing center due to budget constraints. I have several students who would like to visit the center, but it is always booked with appointments, and it is next to impossible to get one that isn't a month out. I would love for my voice (and the voice of my colleagues to be heard on this, but no one listens to 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. Thank you for your time.

Sydney Sharpstene