

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

By Lauren Salig, M.S.

Address: 8201 16th St., Silver Spring, MD 20910

SB 247

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

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FAVORABLE

Good afternoon Chair Griffith, Vice Chair Klausmeier, and members of the Senate Finance Committee. My name is Lauren Salig, and I am a graduate teaching assistant at the University of Maryland, where I have worked for three and a half years. I call on this committee to issue a favorable report to SB 247. 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 four-year institutions. It is clear that this right should be extended to the rest of higher education in Maryland.

As a graduate teaching assistant, I assist in a class of 60 honors students. I run classroom activities, give lectures, grade papers, and meet with students outside of class, all in the service of aiding students' learning. This is in addition to conducting my dissertation research, service to my program and department, and involvement in the broader community through outreach work.

As a PhD student at the University of Maryland, I have experienced first-hand how low graduate assistant stipends can be. I am fortunate enough to have additional fellowships, but many of my peers do not; some are overworked and underpaid, especially when compared to the national average pay for graduate assistants. Without my extra fellowships (which most students don't have), I am unsure how I would be able to make ends meet. I am in my fourth year of my PhD program. Many graduate students work for the University for many years as they get their degree. Being able to have collective bargaining is a democratic right that we deserve. It can be a force for equity and allow for clearer communication between administration and employees. Many other universities already have collective bargaining to everyone's advantage—consider Montgomery College, for example. Collective bargaining rights could do a lot of good for improving the lives of graduate student employees by giving us power to advocate for changes when they are needed.

Members of the committee, employees' needs and voices deserve to be heard. The right to collective bargaining is a fundamental right; it should not be arbitrarily withheld from certain individuals at four-year public institutions. Therefore, I again call for a favorable report to SB 247.