



SEIU Local 500

901 Russell Avenue, Suite 300, Gaithersburg, MD 20879

February 16th, 2023

RE: Senate Bill 0247 - State Personnel - Collective Bargaining - Faculty, Part-Time Faculty, and Graduate Assistants

Support

Chairwoman Griffith and Senate Finance Committee Members,

Good afternoon. My name is Christopher Cano, coordinator for member political engagement at SEIU Local 500. I wish to thank Senator Kramer for his leadership on this issue before us today. Throughout our great state, tens of thousands of residents turn to our public universities as an affordable and effective way to start a new career, learn valuable skills, and begin a better life. Our public universities are anchor institutions in many of our local communities, offering employment, education, and a path to economic empowerment.

Sadly, for grad students and faculty, they remain the only state employees without the right to collectively bargain with their respective administrations. This means that in virtually all decision-making, the professionals who are on the ground at local campuses and working directly with students have no voice. As our faculty leaders will tell you, their working conditions are students' learning conditions. Their lack of a voice has had serious consequences for students, including loss of office hours and access to their instructors outside of class time.

As Maryland looks to recover from COVID, our universities will play a central role. They will not only provide instruction to hardworking Marylanders, but an as yet unforeseen amount of professional retraining for workers who need a fresh start in the new economy. For so many Maryland workers, our universities will be the lifeline they need to recover.

Faculty and staff are the frontline workers of our universities – they interact on a daily basis with students in the classroom, in the dining halls, in the libraries of our institutions of higher learning. They create and maintain the environment in which the scholarship and achievements of our student body happens. Across the state faculty and grad students are demanding that they receive a simple sign of respect in return – to have a voice in their own workplace through collective bargaining.

To guarantee that our public universities provide the structure, atmosphere, and instruction that working Marylanders will need in a post-COVID recovery, it is essential that the educators and staff who work with them day in and day out have a voice at the table. No administration has the first-hand knowledge or expertise that our faculty and grad students will bring to bear in decision making.

I'm asking you today to join us and commit to passing legislation that would grant the right to collectively bargain to university faculty and graduate students.

Thank you for your kind consideration and we ask that you give a favorable report for SB 0247.