

**Written Testimony Submitted to the
Maryland Senate Finance Committee
By Professor Diane Luchese**

SB 247

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

February 16, 2023

FAVORABLE

Dear Chair Griffith, Vice Chair Klausmeier, and members of the Senate Finance Committee,

I am writing to urge you to support SB 247 which would grant collective bargaining rights to faculty, part-time faculty and graduate assistants. I am a Towson University Professor who has taught in the University System of Maryland for the past 24 years. Throughout my tenure, I have experienced the absence of collective bargaining as nothing less than frustrating and unfair. The present time is begging for change; even in his State of the Union address this past week, President Joe Biden proclaimed that all American workers should have this right. Our new Governor Wes Moore campaigned on and promised to not leave anyone behind. I am writing to request that you consider supporting this basic democratic right. I consider myself a dedicated employee of the state, and find value and purpose in my work. I work extremely hard and with passion. I am not disgruntled nor discontent, and recognize that problematic situations can arise in any place of employment. That said, the frustrations that my faculty colleagues and I experience without the means for support or advocacy often raises situations to the level of unfair.

I will provide just a few examples I have personally experienced in my tenure in which the right to collective bargaining might be/might have been advantageous:

1. Under the O'Malley administration when state employees were 'furloughed' for a few days during three years. Although aware of the rationale for that decision to lose pay, we were still forced to teach without pay.
2. Our 'workload' progressively and subtly increases yearly without extra salary compensation, due to a myriad of reasons, whether from insufficient staffing, part-time employees replacing retiring tenured faculty, or the more recent addition of mandatory individual student advising.
3. Being forced to teach music to groups of students singing toward me in small classrooms without proper ventilation (and unable to open windows) during COVID19.
4. Many years without COLA adjustments whereby salaries have not kept up with inflation.
5. Despite our location in a major metropolitan area, the average salary at Towson University is and has been lower than the average salary for all our combined peer institutions.
6. Difficulty finding qualified and experienced adjuncts who are willing to work for the extremely low pay per course they receive.

7. Seeing part time adjuncts often left hanging until the last minute without contracts wondering if they will work the next month; 8. witnessing part-time faculty and lecturers in that precarious employment situation feeling unable to risk exercising their right to academic freedom and free speech.
8. Observing the numbers of administrators continually increasing (and receiving high salaries) while the number of tenure track professors as well as badly-needed support staff have decreased.
9. Experiencing the number of graduate assistantships as far too low to attract a healthy graduate population as well as assist faculty. While personally experiencing the above, I fully recognize that my situation is still better than that of lecturers, adjuncts, and graduate students; these populations feel even less the ability to express their concerns without the fear of losing their jobs.

Collective bargaining rights is a necessary step for Maryland university faculty employees to raise our concerns or bring to light injustices, without fear. The collective voice of faculty has been silenced for too long. Collective bargaining would establish a clearer line of communication and complete transparency between faculty and administration. It would open channels for free speech, conflict resolution, debate, fairness, and equity. These rights should not be too much to ask for. Again, I urge you to support bill 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 4-year institutions. This right should be extended to the rest of higher education in Maryland.

I again therefore call for a favorable report to SB 247.