

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

By Andy Hines

SB 247

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

February 16, 2023

FAVORABLE

Good afternoon Chair Griffith, Vice Chair Klausmeier, and members of the Senate Finance Committee. My name is Andy Hines and I am a Maryland resident who has worked in higher education for over a decade. My spouse is a faculty member in the University System of Maryland, and I work at Swarthmore College in Pennsylvania, though I testify today as a private citizen. 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 4 year institutions. It is clear that this right should be extended to the rest of higher education in Maryland.

I wish to testify generally about the value of collective bargaining in higher education as it extends to full- and part-time faculty, as well as graduate workers. Faculty and graduate students in higher education have long had a complex relationship to collective bargaining. Leaders of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), which grew out of debates about the professional status of faculty at Johns Hopkins in Baltimore in the early twentieth century, saw value in a selective defense of academic freedom and shared governance within higher education. At the time, AAUP viewed faculty unionizing efforts as creating a potential conflict of interest between the protected space of the classroom and the sphere of public debate and opinion. **Faculty who sought to unionize at the turn of the twentieth century, however, argued that unions provided a more direct connection to public concerns and thus provided a claim on higher education's public importance.** Conditions have changed dramatically from this century-old debate that had roots in Maryland, though it is perhaps more the case than ever that the right of collective bargaining for faculty and graduate students will ensure that the state's higher education institutions best serve the public.

Today, faculty—especially those not protected by tenure—find themselves with less control over their working conditions amidst growth in the upper administration of higher education institutions. These conditions jeopardize the ability of part-time faculty and graduate students to convey scholarly ideas freely in the classroom and to request better conditions for their work. This national context holds true in Maryland. **USM administration has grown by nearly 50% since 2015, while faculty wages have stagnated and the increase in part-time faculty has well outstripped the growth of full-time faculty. Existing governance structures diminish rather than amplify the voices of part-time faculty and graduate students and collective**

bargaining can help ensure that the expertise of these groups shape our state's higher education institutions.

I view collective bargaining for faculty as an issue of equitable, multiracial democracy; providing collective bargaining rights is a crucial step towards—to echo Governor Moore's motto—leaving no one behind. Those most marginalized within the faculty hierarchy are most likely to be people of color and women, according to a study from the TIAA institute. Collective bargaining also encourages equity in existing salaries and wages; it can significantly redress the significant gender disparity in salaries at many USM institutions, some of which are near the lowest among their peers. **Improving the economic conditions of USM's instructional staff therefore means improving the economic conditions of a diverse group of Marylanders.**

Furthermore, as organizers have been arguing for a century, collective bargaining units, or unions, *connect* employees to an institution and the wider public, rather than alienate them from them. Collective bargaining activities frequently foreground that teacher working conditions are student learning conditions. Unions also connect part-time faculty, who may be working at multiple postsecondary institutions to make ends meet, more directly to the activities of a particular institution via their local. **In nearly every respect, collective bargaining will solidify connections between workers within the University System of Maryland and the wider state public.** This bill provides an opportunity to strengthen the connection of higher education to the public by investing in and supporting the expertise of academic workers during an urgent moment when public higher education faces existential threats in other states.

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 SB 247.