

**Written Testimony Submitted to the
Maryland Senate Finance Committee
By John Keniston, Senior Faculty Specialist
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 John Keniston and I am a Senior Faculty Specialist in the Department of Geographical Sciences at the University of Maryland, College Park, where I have worked for 5 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 4 year institutions. It is clear that this right should be extended to the rest of higher education in Maryland.

As a Faculty Specialist in the Dept. of Geographical Sciences I work as a geospatial programmer and developer, primarily supporting the activities of the NASA Harvest consortium, a unique consortium hosted by the Dept. of Geographical Sciences, whose mission is to enable and advance adoption of satellite Earth observations by public and private organizations to benefit food security, agriculture, and human and environmental resiliency in the US and worldwide. NASA Harvest and many other special research projects in this department and across the university are supported by employees like me who are performing research, creating operational software, or performing other essential activities beyond traditional teaching.

In this role, I am part of a unique group of employees within my department and across the University. This group is made up of full-time non-teaching professional-track (PTK) faculty who perform a wide variety of duties which are essential to the functioning of each department. Yet, despite our important role, our opportunities for promotion and our standing in both department and University-wide governance is limited. It is my belief that this bill, and the ability for me and my peers to collectively bargain, would help address these concerns by providing clearer lines of communication between faculty and the administration while also strengthening the voice of PTK faculty in shared governance.

Most importantly, collective bargaining is an essential democratic right in a just society. Every worker in this state should have the right to collectively bargain and university employees should not be treated any differently. Therefore as a faculty member at the University of Maryland and a lifelong Marylander I again call for a favorable report to SB 247.