

**Written Testimony Submitted to the
Maryland Senate Finance Committee
By Maria João Lobo Antunes, Associate Professor, Towson University
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 Maria João and I am an Associate Professor in the Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Criminal Justice at Towson University. I have lived in Maryland for 20 years now, and am raising all 4 of my children here. I began at Towson as an adjunct professor, teaching at night. I secured a lecturer position in early 2013 and a tenure-track job beginning in August 2015. My experience in different academic roles provides me with a unique perspective on the Bill being proposed. 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.

Towson University has traditionally been seen as a “teaching” institution, which means professors have a higher teaching load, than at University of Maryland- College Park, for example. Faculty routinely teach 3 courses in the Fall and 4 courses in the Spring (the 3-4 teaching load), while also providing individualized support to over 50 advisees, each semester. This means that faculty can have anywhere between 100 to 150 students per semester, in addition to the advisee roster. Unlike some of my colleagues, I am also a prolific grant writer, and in 2016 was awarded a federal grant to study residential mobility and youth delinquency (<https://nij.ojp.gov/bio/maria-jo-lobo-antunes>). Because of the very limited input of faculty regarding their workload, I was unable to secure a course release, which meant in addition to my usual 3-3 courseload of 3 classes per semester (we were given a course release for the 50+ advising load) I supervised a graduate student and ran a National Institute of Justice project. This placed a great toll on my mental and physical health. But there was really no-one to turn to or seek help with revising my workload but contributed financially to my department and institution.

Recently, Towson has made a push to become a Research 2 institution. With this designation comes more opportunities for federal and possible state fundings, but the benefits are not likely to be experienced by faculty. Faculty have had no input in how the transition is to take place, no voice in the discussion and the process has been opaque. For example, we have been told that faculty need to pursue more grant funding, and if we did, we would have course releases to help support our work while also mentoring grad students. However, Towson also decided to make advising obligatory for all full-time faculty. Last academic year I crafted 6 federal grants, and yet continue to teach advanced courses in criminology- 3 each semester. A dear colleague of mine

has been awarded several grants and is teaching a 3-4, meaning 3 classes in the fall and now 4 in the spring while also managing these grants. Faculty have virtually no avenue for reprieve or to seek help addressing these issues. There are also grave problems with diversity, equity, and inclusion, but faculty are unable to address these problems without fear of administrative retaliation. To be clear, as I am sure those in opposition to the bill will state, faculty must provide a workload agreement whereby they designate percentages of effort across research, teaching and committee service. Therefore, in *theory* faculty could suggest for example 60% teaching, 30% research and 10% service, or any combination. In *practice* faculty are instructed to put down 75-80% teaching, 15-20% research and whatever remains for service, but also expected to produce quality research and grant-activity. Faculty dedicated to both research and teaching often work beyond the 40 hours a week, well into the weekend. Without the support of collective bargaining, faculty are subjected to the whim of administration who will readily state there are mechanisms for research support but never provide such support. From an administrative perspective this makes sense- require more work with less financial or institutional support and without any oversight or transparency. Towson University does not even have an ombudsperson to help navigate these issues, which makes collective bargaining for many of us a beacon of hope.

I would also like to share insight into the working conditions of adjunct faculty, as I was one. Adjuncts are part-time instructors. They teach anywhere from 1 to 5 courses in a semester, frequently across different institutions. Adjuncts are paid \$4000 per course, per semester, which means they receive \$4000 total from August to December or January to May, unless they teach more. Adjuncts are not entitled to benefits and although many teach during the after hours, they are required to pay for parking which is about \$200 per semester. We have advocated for these fees to be waived for adjuncts, but to no avail. Moreover, adjuncts often do not have office space, and therefore are unable to meet with students. When there was a COVID stipend given to faculty, adjuncts were not eligible, even though they were the group of faculty who most needed the help.

Currently, the system is set-up whereby faculty have little say in shared governance. Administrators can impose conditions without consequence. Ultimately, students are the ones affected, as professors face burnout and disengagement from academia. Starting before the pandemic, but certainly during and after it, we are seeing more educators leave, because of pervasive harassment, abuse, low wages and lack of support. The right to collective bargaining is a first step in creating a more diverse, inclusive, and equitable higher education in Maryland, that will benefit students and faculty alike.

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 country, 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, especially as they ultimately impact those we hold to be most important in our professions- the students. I again therefore call for a **favorable** report to SB 247.

Thank you,
Maria João Lobo Antunes