

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

By Valentina Rosales

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 Valentina Rosales, and I am a PhD candidate in Comparative Literature who has been working as a GA for the Cinema and Media Program and as a lecturer and TA for the Department of English 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.

My workload usually consists in lecturing two courses per semester or in being a GA plus lecturing one or two courses. I have 30 to 50 students per semester which, independently on the subject matter of the course, the grading, the preparation of classes (and, in the case of my assistantship, the preparation of promotion-material, marketing, and social media) has little to do with my dissertation's research, taking away considerable time from my own academic pursuits.

My support for this bill stems from the pressure that we—graduate students—are under to both fulfill all the tasks that our assistantships and course-loads ask from us while at the same time trying to complete our dissertations to earn our title and eventually find a job. Moreover, beyond the time that the classes and assistantships take away from our research, they do not pay enough for us to support our living conditions. Most of us (especially foreign students such as myself) cannot work outside of the university, making it impossible to earn enough money to pay for rent, food, as well as UMD's mandatory fees (which are also higher for foreign students), forcing us to count on our families (or other third parties) to meet our basic economic needs. I therefore believe that enacting this bill is of crucial importance, for it would allow us to negotiate and have a voice regarding our working conditions, ultimately making our living situation less precarious.

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. The democratic nature of the bill would grant us the right to speak up as workers, just like it is possible to do so in many other public higher ed institutions in the country, and indeed in many private, prestigious institutions in our own state. Consequently, the reasons to exempt 4-year public institutions from this path no longer make sense. I thus iterate here my call for a favorable report to SB 247.