

February 16, 2023

RE: Senate Bill 0247 - State Personnel - Collective Bargaining - Faculty, Part-Time Faculty, and Graduate Assistants

Support

Chairman Griffith and Senate Finance Committee Members,
My name is Mitchell Tropin, I teach at the University of Maryland Global Campus and serve as an officer of its Adjunct Faculty Association.

I am here to urge passage of SB 0247, which would give faculty and graduate students at University System of Maryland institutions something that every other state employee already enjoys and deserves—the right to collective bargaining.

I know USM schools, having taught at five of them, besides UMGC. I taught at the University of Maryland College Park, Towson, Morgan State, and University of Baltimore. Each school is unique in its own way.

However, they also have something in common: their faculty are all working hard to give their students the tools, skills, and knowledge that will enable them to achieve a good, solid middle-class life. That's terrific.

But you know what also would be terrific? Making sure that same hard-working faculty also enjoy a good middle-class life.

Part-time faculty often make up 50 percent of USM teaching staffs. But they are underpaid, not making a living wage.

In addition, collective bargaining would give faculty and grad students a real voice. The playwright Athol Fugard once wrote: a man who cannot speak for himself is not a man; he is a ghost. We may not be ghosts but we are invisible, unable to speak with administrations.

From serving on UMGC's AFA, I can tell you they are no substitute for a real union. My AFA only occasionally meets with the administration. They listen but nothing changes. For effective shared governance, USM faculties need a union.

Let me conclude, I also teach at Montgomery College which has unions, and I'm proud of how the unions for the last 10 years have worked effectively with MC leadership for the benefit of the college's entire community. University faculty deserve no less. Thank you very much.

I call on you to vote yes on SB 0247 and strongly urge a favorable committee report.