

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

**By Ziad Bentahar, PhD**

**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 Ziad Bentahar and I am Associate Professor at Towson University, where I have worked since 2014. 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.

At Towson, I typically teach seven college courses per academic year. I teach courses in Arabic and French language and culture at various levels from absolute beginner to advanced fluency. I have also taught first-year seminars to introduce incoming students to the rigors of college work, and a graduate seminar in Global Humanities for Master's students. As a faculty member, I am in the classroom, in direct contact with our rising generations as they seek a public education for a fair chance in society. Previously, I taught college courses at two other universities in other States, as well as at a third university overseas, for a total of approximately two decades of university teaching experience. Therefore, my testimony is informed not only by my work in a public academic institution in Maryland, but also by the broader national and international context of the educational stakes in our State.

Our work as faculty requires devoted focus, time, and energy to ensure quality of education and production of knowledge. This makes it impossible to dedicate additional time to communicate effectively with administration. Research shows that Collective Bargaining can strengthen relations between administration and faculty. Collective Bargaining allows us faculty to concentrate on our vocation as educators, educating the people of the State, their children and relatives, their neighbors, coworkers, service providers, and their fellow citizens and human beings. Just because education is a labor of love, it doesn't mean it's not labor. As such, it deserves the same rights as any other form of labor in America. Collective Bargaining is a basic democratic right that ensures fair working conditions that the faculty deserve, not only because they are literally in the

classrooms and labs, deep in the nitty gritty of public education, but also because they are citizens of Maryland deserving of the dignity and ideals of this country.

Additionally, while the numbers of students have increased steadily over the years, the numbers of faculty have decreased. Collective Bargaining for faculty will create conditions that make the professions of education more attractive for potential future educators. It will ensure that we don't run out of professors. It is the faculty of tomorrow who will enable our universities to continue to be hubs of knowledge production and scientific innovations, and attract the best and brightest from within our shores as well as beyond. Collective Bargaining safeguards our public universities because it makes the profession of faculty member an appealing job prospect to rising generations of Marylanders preparing to enter the workforce. Our public universities are too important to our society; let's make them attractive workplaces for the faculty of the future, lest we waste our potential as world leaders in science and education.

Esteemed committee members, I call for a **favorable report to SB 247**. Collective bargaining is beneficial to public education in Maryland. 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. Please support our educators' right to have the option to organize, and pursue their vocation while having access to fair and transparent workplace conditions.

Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

Ziad Bentahar