

February 15, 2023

Members of the Senate Finance Committee:

I am writing to urge you to lend your **strong support to SB 247**, which would confer the right to collectively bargain to University System of Maryland (USM) full-time faculty, contingent faculty, and graduate student workers.

I speak as a Maryland resident who for 30 years held a tenure track position at the University of Delaware (where higher education employees have collective bargaining rights). And I speak as a parent who supported two of my children through degrees at USM campuses – one a Phi Beta Kappa alum of University of Maryland, College Park, the other an MPH graduate of University of Maryland, Baltimore.

Without collective bargaining rights, USM priorities have grown out of touch with the frontline of the university classroom. More and more funds are being siphoned off to administration, creating an imbalance in priorities where teaching and instruction get the short end of the stick. A recent study found expenditures on administration at the University of Maryland College Park rose by 43.4 % between 2015 and 2019, and have risen even higher in the years since. The average salary for administrators is now more than DOUBLE that of full-time tenure track faculty, a trend echoed at the other USM campuses.

At the same time, inflation-adjusted salaries for full-time tenure track faculty have dropped significantly — leaving them now sitting well BELOW most of our universities' self-selected peer institutions.

And the number of full-time tenure track faculty has eroded as a share of the instructional workforce. My own kids confronted the way this imbalance in administration vs. instructional investment works to the detriment of USM students. Students are increasingly taught by contingent faculty, highly qualified instructors who find themselves stuck in precarious, underpaid positions that make it difficult to devote the time to teaching that stronger benefits and job security would allow for. Students are also increasingly taught by graduate student workers who are stretched thin, overworked and financially stressed by their lack of a livable wage.

University faculty have long highlighted the poor understanding of these working conditions held by administrators who sit too far away from the day to day frontline of instruction. A 2010 formal “meet and confer process” was to have provided a route for greater faculty participation in university priority-setting, but this process has been left unimplemented or largely ignored by most USM campus administrations. Collective bargaining rights are needed.

If Maryland is to meet the future challenges posed by its expanding and diversifying student population, then we must grant collective bargaining rights to these employees. These rights will ensure that the perspectives of frontline faculty and instructional staff are considered more seriously when campus decisions are made. As states like Delaware have shown, collective bargaining in higher education can enhance campus engagement in genuine dialogue, to the betterment of the university, its workers, and its students. Please support the passage of SB 247.

Sincerely,

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