



A Union of Professionals
AFT-Maryland

5800 Metro Drive, Suite 100 • Baltimore, MD 21215-3226
410/764-3030 • fax: 410/764-3008
md.aft.org

Marietta English
PRESIDENT

Kenya Campbell
SECRETARY-TREASURER

**Written Testimony Submitted for the Record to the Maryland House of Delegates
Before the House Appropriations Committee
January 28, 2020**

**HB 214 – Higher Education – Collective Bargaining – Graduate Assistants (Graduate Assistant Collective Bargaining Fairness Act)
SUPPORT**

Good morning Madam Chair and members of the House Appropriations Committee.

As the representative of the thousands of education and public employees working within the state, the AFT-Maryland strongly supports HB 214, a bill that would grant one of the last groups of state employees in Maryland the fundamental rights that nearly every state worker enjoys; namely, the right to come together and bargain collectively for their rights and a meaningful voice in their working conditions. HB 214 would close the loophole that unfairly excluded Maryland's Graduate Assistants—who do a significant portion of the work of the University—from participating in collective bargaining, and as such, we ask for a favorable report for HB 214.

Arguments against this fundamental right, largely from University System administration, ignore two key facts: collective bargaining 1) exists for graduate assistants numerous peer institutions, and 2) also supports, not undercuts, the concept of “shared governance” in our state universities across the nation. At institutions where the academic workers do engage in collective bargaining, they still do have strong structures of shared governance in the form of graduate student councils. Collective bargaining generally deals with conditions of employment, and has legal structures in place to assure agreements are enforceable and disputes are resolved objectively. In issues of employment, collective bargaining is actually a guarantee that university administration will truly share governance with graduate workers in determining how the university will work, not just take grad workers concern under advisement.

Madam chair and members of the committee, we know that collective bargaining works both in Maryland's public agencies—including the non-academic staff in our universities—and throughout public higher ed institutions in the United States. Of the University of Maryland's self-identified 5 peer institutions, 4 of them

- UCLA,
- UC Berkeley,
- The University of Michigan, and
- the University of Illinois

have collective bargaining for graduate assistants.

The majority of universities in the Big 10 (including the two mentioned above)

- The University of Minnesota,
- The University of Iowa (where current College Park President Wallace Loh was Provost),
- the University of Wisconsin-Madison,
- Michigan State University,
- Penn State University,
- Rutgers University

grant collective bargaining rights to graduate assistants, and the majority of top ten public universities in the United States—defined by the 2018 US News and World Report ranking of public universities—have collective bargaining for graduate assistants as well. It is clear that collective bargaining does not harm the academic standing of the university.

Madam chair and members of the committee, Graduate Assistants do the work of the university by teaching the courses offered to undergrads, and oftentimes doing the research that the University uses to benefit the residents of the state. For these reasons, we ask this committee give a favorable report to HB 214. Thank you.