

Delores G. Kelley, Chair
Brian J. Feldman, Vice Chair
3 East Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

SB 658
Supporting

Dear Chair Kelley, Vice Chair Feldman, and Members of the Finance Committee,

I am Brian Sarginger. I am a 6th year PhD Candidate in the field of History writing my 3rd testimony in favor of collective bargaining rights for graduate student workers. In my time at the University of Maryland, I have filled many roles as a graduate assistant, a teaching assistant, and now, an instructor of record. These roles have given me a great deal of appreciation for the kind of work done by graduate student workers and how they help the university fulfill its stated purpose in educating those who attend. It has also given me a much greater appreciation for the protections that we lack. Often, our roles are ill-defined with limited formal resources and support for how exactly we are supposed to fulfill our obligations as workers with limited protections and requirements made clear to us, our supervisors, and our departments. All too often, our system of work relies on the beneficence or intervention of individual faculty or administrators, leaving many of our workplace issues subject to random chance for correction. Collective bargaining would provide an opportunity for graduate student workers to address these systemic difficulties with collective action rather than individual pleading.

Beyond formalizing our roles and duties as graduate student workers, collective bargaining would allow graduate student workers to confront other social issues facing them. These topics range from sick leave, to poverty, to job precarity, to housing, to family leave, to childcare. Graduate students face a combination of these issues every day with nothing more than the occasional workshop or piece of advice. Collective bargaining provides an opportunity for graduate students to organize around these issues and work with the administration at UMD in a formal, legally enforceable system. Collective bargaining for graduate student workers is not an unreasonable demand for the individuals who grade exams, teach classes, facilitate administrative work, and generally provide integral support for our University.

Sincerely,

Brian R. Sarginger
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