

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,

Please pass SB 658 and legalize collective bargaining rights for all of Maryland's graduate employees as soon as possible.

The cost-of-living around College Park is far too low compared to our wages and the value we bring to the University of Maryland. Many graduate students suffer silently in borderline poverty living situation due to the high rent costs in College Park and surrounding areas, and the overall high cost of living here. Many students are too overrun with work to fight for higher wages and better health care and better work-life balance on their own. This is why legalizing collective bargaining rights for Maryland graduate employees is a MUST. When we actually count up all the hours we put in from teaching, research and separate required learning (to actually conduct good research), we are often times paid at or less than the national hourly wage of \$7.25 per hour. This is absolutely unacceptable considering the unique and nuanced role we play in the university's ecosystem.

Additionally, when you receive a fellowship, you do not get the same health plan options as if you were a student. They are much more limited, and often worse. Many students have to pay out of pocket to some extent because if they need a better health insurance plan outside of the university, as it might be more expensive than the money given to cover your healthcare under the fellowship. Graduate students need collective bargaining rights.

Please consider legalizing collective bargaining rights for us.

Sincerely,

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