

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 writing in support of HB 214 / SB 658, in favor of allowing Graduate Assistants at the University of Maryland to bargain collectively. I am a graduate assistant myself, working in the University of Maryland's library system. The reason I was not in attendance at the hearing in Annapolis was specifically because of my work duties as a graduate assistant. I teach information literacy sessions, coordinate library events, and am a member of library committees. My GA colleagues and myself perform vital work for several library departments; this work allows the Libraries to provide the services they do.

Many University departments and institutions, and the services they provide, rely on graduate work to function. Countless students, staff, and faculty at the University unknowingly depend on graduate workers; they use the University services that are only possible through our work. Graduate assistants are employees, by any definition of the word. I am lucky to have a supportive supervisor; however, some of my fellow GAs are not so fortunate. It is essentially at the supervisor's discretion whether or not to honor the terms of the GA's appointment, to force them to work longer hours for no increase in pay, or to force them to perform work outside the description of their positions. They are able to do this because a GA's presence at the University is dependent on their assistantship, and a GA has no recourse beyond their supervisor. We deserve protection from poor work conditions, real contracts, and the dignity that every employee should enjoy. Collective bargaining would allow us to make some of this a reality.

Sincerely,

Benjamin Shaw
Master's in Library Science, College of Information
Graduate Assistant for Teaching & Outreach
8405 Greenwood Ave, Apt #2
Silver Spring, MD 20912
benjashaw@gmail.com