

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 urge you to support the legislation granting collective bargaining rights to graduate student workers employed by the University of Maryland system. We are not just students, our labor is vital to the functioning of the entire university system. However by refusing to allow us to collectively bargain, we are left without any leverage to prevent our exploitation by the university.

I was employed as a teaching assistant by the physics department last semester. While I was told that my TA position should only be 20 hours per week, and would be paid as such, it routinely took 25 hours or more to fulfill all my duties. Similarly, the classes I was required to take were officially only supposed to take 20 hours each week, they would also take 25 hours or more per week. So while the University insisted that all of the work required of me could be done in 40 hours each work, it would often take 50 to 60 hours each week, with no overtime provided. When I raised concerns with the professors I was TAing for, he just said the work needed to be done and ignored my point that they were asking for an excessive amount of work without appropriate pay. I have seen TAs in other departments routinely have similar excessive workloads for even less pay.

Further, the pay we receive in the physics department is barely adequate to survive. The university claims that our cost of living is only \$18000 per year but that is in practice far lower than we actually require. In fact that is barely adequate to cover the cost of rent in university subsidized graduate student housing. According to MIT, the cost of living in Prince George's county is approximately \$36,000 per year on average so the University's claims about our cost of living are completely laughable.

Without collective bargaining we have no way to negotiate with the university to have our concerns addressed. While some of the university staff and faculty are sympathetic towards the graduate student workers, many are not and treat us as a source of cheap labor. We have no leverage to deal with exploitive faculty and staff. Please grant us the right to collectively bargain with the university so we can stand up to the exploitation we deal with daily.

Sincerely,

Max Trevor

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