

Asim Ali_Fav_SB658

Uploaded by: Ali, Asim

Position: FAV

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 collective bargaining rights for graduate employees, and I strongly urge you to pass SB 658. The right to collectively bargain is a well-established right, and one that should be available to all workers. In the case of graduate workers, however, this right has been denied by the University of Maryland on the grounds that graduate workers are not employees, but rather students in an apprenticeship system. There are a number of problems with this argument.

First, just because someone is an apprentice doesn't mean they can't be paid a living wage.

Second, working conditions are learning conditions: if the people conducting research and teaching courses are unable to make a living, then the university's ability to produce new research and educate students is severely compromised. Since universities are engines of economic growth, we are effectively wasting our own money if we don't allow universities to operate at their full potential. And yet, this is exactly what we do when we deny labor rights to graduate employees.

Third, the basic facts of graduate work contradict the notion that graduate employees are apprentices. Many graduate employees do not work in academic departments, but instead work as administrative assistants in non-academic departments in the university; they are not apprenticing in their own academic disciplines, but rather working at low-paying jobs to make ends meet while they take courses and conduct research. Furthermore, because universities are no longer hiring many tenure-track faculty, the jobs for which graduate students are "apprenticing" are now largely non-existent. Indeed, 75% of university faculty nationwide (and 66% at the University of Maryland) are now "adjunct" labor: part-time teaching faculty who do not receive a regular income or benefits. As a result, the majority of graduate employees will not be able to find work in a university system upon earning an advanced degree, and hence cannot be considered apprentices. They are, in fact, employees who frequently do not work in their chosen fields when they are students, and are unlikely to work in their chosen fields upon earning their degrees.

Fourth, many graduate students feel that they have no workplace rights at all without the right to collectively bargain. This is because, in many cases, the person who supervises their employment also supervises their scholarship. Hence, graduate workers often feel they must agree to unreasonable employment demands simply to earn a degree. This is not apprenticeship; it is exploitation.

For these reasons, I ask you to end our unjust system of labor exploitation by supporting SB 658. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Asim A. Ali, Ph.D.

Mikol Bailey

Uploaded by: Bailey, Mikol

Position: FAV

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 to urge you to support SB 658. In addition to being a Ph.D. candidate in History, I am a teaching assistant in Religious Studies and undergraduate advisor for the Jewish Studies department. I also work 15 hours per week off-campus to be able to afford to live in this area.

Sincerely,

Mikol Bailey
Ph.D., History Department
Teaching Assistant and Undergraduate Advisor
180 High Park Ln, Apt 209
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mikolbailey@gmail.com

Felix Bartsch

Uploaded by: Bartsch, Felix

Position: FAV

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 to implore you to support SB 658 and grant graduate assistants the right to collectively bargain. As the GSG representative of the interdisciplinary Neuroscience And Cognitive Science (NACS) program, I hear from students from many different departments with different funding situations. However, there is one thread common to everyone - our contracts state that we are being compensated for 20 hours of work a week, while all of us are expected to put in at least 40 and a majority of senior students get closer to 60. At the same time, our mentors rely on us to do our so they can continue to attract external funding (through the Brain and Behavior Initiative Seed Grant program, we brought in \$10 mil on a \$1 mil investment from the university. I can assure you that this 10 to 1 return of investment would not have happened if only professors had done the work.) We recognize that our careers require a serious time commitment, but we should at least be compensated fairly for the effort we put in. Too many people in my program are getting burned out, not because of academic stress, but because they're worried about taking on even more loans to make ends meet even as they're publishing high-impact papers and increasing the prestige of the university.

We need a living wage. We need legal, enforceable contracts. We need guaranteed benefits. We need a third-party grievance policy. And we only ask for the tools needed to attain these basic Guarantees. Passing SB 658 and grating us the right to collectively bargain would allow us at least a modicum of say in how we're treated and compensated, in addition to simply being the fair thing to do.

Sincerely,

Felix Bartsch
B.S. Program in Neuroscience and Cognitive Science (NACS)
Department of Biology Research Assistant
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University of Maryland
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Debopriyo Biswas

Uploaded by: Biswas, Debopriya

Position: FAV

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 legislation granting collective bargaining rights to graduate assistants, who play the roles of employees in every way, at universities in Maryland.

I am entering my second semester as a graduate research assistant in the Physics Department at University of Maryland - College Park. The level of disconnect between what the administration claims is expected of graduate students and my actual experience as a graduate assistant is stupendous. Never have I met a graduate student that only works 20 hours a week - this is laughable, as this would take a PhD student 10 years to complete the graduate requirements and meet the research rigor expectations at a university!

The University administration has argued that we make enough money by quoting numbers for bare necessities. Given those numbers, if I were to incur an accident or medical emergency, I would not be able to afford my PhD anymore. It is dehumanizing to pay GAs only enough to survive and not expect us to do things like travel or see a concert. And I am still one of the fortunate ones, for GAs in some of the other departments are more severely underpaid than us.

In an ideal world with laws that looked out for graduate workers, I would not be pushing for collective bargaining. Sadly, that is not the case in Maryland. At my undergraduate institution, Princeton University, graduate students were paid about \$34,000 every year in stipends, even though the cost of living there is not that different from here. At UMD the graduate stipend is \$17,802 for a 9-month assistantship and \$23,736 for a 12-month assistantship. After taxes and mandatory fees, this is only enough to make ends meet but not to lead healthy and balanced lives. And it is becoming grimly apparent that the university administration will not look out for its graduate workers either.

Collective bargaining will lend a much needed voice to graduate workers who are the lifeblood of this university, yet are often exploited by professors and the administration. Without it, we cannot negotiate better pay or deal with exploitive faculty.

Sincerely,

Debopriyo Biswas
PhD Student, Physics

Research Assistant
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Brice Bowrey_FAV_SB658

Uploaded by: Bowrey, Brice

Position: FAV

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,

My name is Brice Bowrey and I am a graduate student at the University of Maryland – College Park. I am writing to you to express my support for SB 658. I believe that this bill, and the collective bargaining that it enables, is the surest way to improve the quality of life of graduate students. Furthermore, I believe SB 658 will ensure that graduate students are adequately and fairly compensated for the services, skills, and work that they provide to the University of Maryland system. In my opinion, graduate students are as essential to the functioning of the University as professors, administrators, or any other members of the faculty and staff. However, graduate students are often unable to financially support themselves as they pursue their studies. The cost of living in the DMV area is high and rising, while salaries and other forms of compensation have remained the same or declined. Thus, many graduate students are forced to work multiple jobs or extreme hours in order to stay afloat.

I believe that this situation is untenable. The conditions under which graduate students currently work negatively impact the undergraduate students of the University of Maryland system by diminishing graduate teaching assistant's ability to provide quality education and academic support. Furthermore, without sufficient time and financial means, graduate students cannot conduct the research which will improve the community and the nation in the years to come. History shows that collective bargaining is one of the surest ways to improve working conditions in a fair and mutually beneficial manner. Thus, I urge you to support SB 658 and grant graduate students the right to negotiate for adequate compensation and fair working conditions.

Sincerely,

Brice Bowrey
History PhD, Department of History
Graduate Fellow
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Domenick Braccia_FAV_SB658

Uploaded by: Braccia, Domenick

Position: FAV

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,

Domenick J. Braccia
PhD Student, Biological Sciences Program
Teaching Assistant and Research Assistant
Room 3112 Iribe Center
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Meredith Brown

Uploaded by: Brown, Meredith

Position: FAV

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 to express my support for the passage of HB 214/SB 658, known as the Higher Education - Collective Bargaining - Graduate Assistants (Graduate Assistant Collective Bargaining Fairness Act). I have been a graduate assistant at the University of Maryland College Park for the last five years. In that time I have been both a research assistant and a teaching assistant.

As a research assistant at the University of Maryland, I have contributed to the completion of tasks and deliverables for research grants awarded to the faculty at the University of Maryland in the form of published papers, data sets, data validation, annual reports to the funding agencies, conference presentations, and science team meeting presentations. Without the work of graduate assistants, like myself, the obligations of the grants awarded to the faculty would not be met, which in turn would damage the potential for securing future grant funding.

As a teaching assistant and graduate instructor, I have taught and TA'd for courses that are required for our undergraduate major. I have been in charge of overseeing lab sections, creating and updating lecture and lab materials and practice problem sets, assigning class readings, and grading assignments and exams for classes ranging in size from 6 to 250. Without TAs and, like myself, the lecturers and tenure track faculty would be too overwhelmed with work to effectively teach students effectively, and without graduate instructors, some classes would go untaught entirely.

I personally have been asked to perform duties beyond the scope of my assistantship and had little to no recourse due to the ambiguity and lack of real workplace protections for graduate students, since we are not regular employees, despite the fact that we play a vital role in the functioning of the University. While I understand that this is a complex issue, I strongly support the right for graduate students to unionize in order to ensure the proper workplace protections and better advocate for our needs.

Thank you for your consideration.
Sincerely,

Meredith G. L. Brown
PhD Candidate, Department of Geographical Sciences
Research Assistant
303 Dewey Drive
Annapolis, MD 21401
mglbrown@gmail.com

Cameron Busacca

Uploaded by: Busacca, Cameron

Position: FAV

Delores G. Kelley, Chair, 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'm writing this letter in support of SB 658, to allow for collective bargaining for graduate student employees. My name is Cameron Busacca. I am a doctoral student in the International Education Policy program here at the University of Maryland. I have worked in the International Student & Scholar Services Office since 2015, only away for one year between my Masters' and Doctorate program. I have seen the office go through tremendous change, including the implementation of the international student fee. This was implemented to provide better services for international students, and the argument in defense of implementing this fee was to match the standards of other Big Ten schools. Yet, when it comes to matching Big Ten standards on collective bargaining, we fall behind. Are you interested in taking actions which truly benefit the students or actions which only benefit the institution?

I want to speak momentarily about the benefit graduate assistants bring to the ISSS office. The ISSS office advises more international students than most other Big Ten institutions per advisor, meaning that our advisors do not have the time and ability to meet all the needs of the students. As such, we, as graduate assistants in the office, provide a great amount of support and innovation which benefits the international student population. In many instances, we provide innovation to both structural and administrative components, as well as programmatic. I, for one, was grateful to be able to rescue the English Conversation Partners program here at UMD. A program that works towards the university's mission of diversity, internationalization, and cultural engagement in a way that few others on campus do. As a graduate assistant, I have been able to bring theory from my field into praxis in this program.

If you refuse the right to collectively bargain, then you fail to recognize the value we bring to the university. Collective bargaining will allow us to, should we need to, voice our needs, which will *improve* our situation and thus our impact on the university and its community. Unfortunately, more and more universities are run like a business. By allowing us to advocate for our needs as a collective, we will be able to make the university more competitive as an institution, thereby, improving the recruitment of potential talent, and increasing the brand of the university. This is even more true when considering the position of our international graduate students, many of whom need the funding provided by assistantships to study, and even then, struggle. They are captive to the university, since they can not work outside the university. Therefore, if another university, with a lower cost of living, provides more money, it is an easy decision to make. I have seen this time and time again in my office. If you want to increase the draw of UMD nationally and internationally, you will allow graduate students to collectively bargain on their behalf.

Sincerely,

Cameron Busacca
Ph.D., International Education Policy, College of Education
Administrative Assistant, University Honors, Honors College

1126 HJ Patterson Hall, University of Maryland, College Park, MD 20742
busaccacameron@gmail.com

Rishabh Chaudhary

Uploaded by: Chaudhary, Rishabh

Position: FAV

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 SB 658 and strongly urge the State of Maryland to recognize the graduate students at public universities as the employees with the same rights as all other state employees. We do an extraordinary amount of work beyond our own studies including assisting research and teaching. The University of Maryland as a Research 1 institution is in a great need of researchers to contribute to the excellence of academics, therefore, we work on different research projects concurrently and stay up late every day to ensure the progress. We are also the teachers who work with undergraduates and graduates on a daily basis, preparing their educational resources, answering their questions in time, leading them to do projects that related to their professions. 20 hours per week is our least working time if you would like to complete these tasks in a satisfactory manner, however, the number of 20 hours is the reality that we have little impact on in the contracts and the basis on which our stipend is calculated. Facing the increasing demand for the work from the university, all graduate employees tend to work beyond 40 and even 60 hours per week. Graduate employees are indispensable part of the university for both researching and teaching, we hope the State of Maryland recognizes this as such by passing SB 658 and finally giving us the rights we deserve as the state employees.

Thank you for your consideration of this bill.

Sincerely,

Rishabh Chaudhary
M.S. Mechanical Engineering
Research Assistant
1186 Engineering Lab Building, Center for Advanced Life Cycle Engineering (CALCE)
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University of Maryland
College Park, MD 20742
rish5251umd.edu

Shao-Peng Chen

Uploaded by: Chen, Shao-Peng

Position: FAV

Delores G. Kelley, Chair, 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 Appropriations Committee,

I am a graduate student and graduate assistant at the University of Maryland. I write to you today to urge your support on HB 270.

I request your support as the Maryland State Legislature to allow graduate students the same rights afforded to the employees of any other organization: the right to organize and the right to choose to collectively bargain. We as graduate Assistants, do a lot of work at the University and we request you to give us the right to bargain as a body, just like any other state employee. There is a lot of variation in pay among graduate students and many have taken loans just so that they can continue living healthily. I personally don't receive enough money monthly that I can pay all my bills, I have to work extra hours besides my assistantship to be able make ends meet.

I am requesting you to consider supporting the legislation to allow us to bargain collectively and improve how graduate students live while carrying out important research and work at the flagship institution of Maryland.

Sincerely,

Shao-Peng Chen
Reliability Engineering
Research Assistant
9013 St Andrew Pl, College Park, MD
spchen@terpmail.umd.edu

University of Washington Graduate and

Uploaded by: Conti, Giuliana

Position: FAV

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,

We would like to express our sincere and deep support for graduate student unionization. As re-elected President of our Graduate and Professional Student Senate at the University of Washington, and five years of involvement in GPSS as a grad student on campus, I have experienced first hand the immeasurable benefits of our union, UAW 4121. Colleagues of mine have had to utilize the benefits UAW offers in unfortunate circumstances where their rights as student employees had been infringed upon and where having a third party mediator and advocate was pivotal in their ability to accomplish their work and graduate on time. Other students who have thankfully not needed to utilize the union regularly express the weight lifted off of them, and the sense of ongoing relief, that they are protected should anything unfortunate happen.

Graduate students on our campus are an average age of 32, have been working professionals before returning for an additional degree, are parents and caregivers, and are further professionalizing themselves to contribute more to their families and communities. We may technically be students, but we are professionals who are operating in a professional environment and we have the right to protect our fellow employees of the university. Then, to complicate matters, we also work in close proximity with staff and faculty while teaching and conducting research with undergraduate students. We are perhaps one of the most silent and vulnerable populations on campus considering the number of hats we wear and the fear of retribution we face should we need to stand up for ourselves. The apprenticeship model our university systems are built on does not lend to self-advocacy without repercussions, and as students who rely on others for career development and placement, especially from advisers and other faculty, we need the union as a resource to support us should the interaction of our work, our research, our relationship with faculty become precarious.

We would not have trans-inclusive healthcare without our union. We would not have the financial benefits we live on without our union. We would not feel as safe without our union. We would not be as effective as teachers, researchers, and learners without our union.

We support collective bargaining rights for Maryland graduate and professional students.

Sincerely,

Giuliana Conti
President, Graduate and Professional Student Senate, University of Washington
HUB 314
206.543.8988, gpsspres@uw.edu

Mary Corbin Sies

Uploaded by: Corban Sies, Mary

Position: FAV

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 collective bargaining rights for graduate student employees in the State of Maryland; I urge you to pass SB658.

I have been a faculty member at the University of Maryland College Park since 1988. I currently direct my department's undergraduate Bachelor of Arts program in American Studies. Our Ph.D. students provide most of the lower level coursework for our degree program. I cannot consider them instructors-in-training or apprentices. Many of our graduate assistants teach every facet of our courses, just as I do as a professor. They create their courses, select the readings, write the syllabus and determine the course calendar. They prepare and teach every class session. They hold office hours to help students succeed in their courses and they do a lot of informal advising. They create all of the assignments and do all the grading, work out the grading scale, and turn in the grades at the end of the semester. Their work to teach their classes is identical to what I do as a tenured professor, so they are clearly employees, like I am.

While graduate assistants function as employees, they are treated like second class citizens. This starts with their low stipend. In a humanities department like mine, students teach 1-2 courses a semester and they often can't teach during the summer. Their stipend for the year is \$16,619, below the poverty level for our region. In the humanities, students are not working as part of a grant-funded team so their stipend is not supplemented by monies from a grant. \$16,619 is their total income and they are not expected to take on any additional employment to make ends meet. The average rent in our area is upwards of \$1000/month, so the stipend doesn't stretch to maintain students adequately with a healthy diet and enough money to cover their books and expenses. A UMD Dining Services survey completed in 2018-19 found that 25% of our graduate students are food insecure.

In addition, graduate assistants are often put in situations where they have no workplace rights at all. They can be asked or manipulated into working more than their maximum (for full-time GAs) 20 hours a week. They often have no recourse to protest this kind of exploitation because their work supervisors also have control over their progress toward the degree and toward the kinds of opportunities that help them build successful credentials. They often choose to suffer in silence rather than risk losing their GAs or angering professors or administrators who have control over their graduate student careers.

In most departments on campus, graduate assistants perform crucial work that enables students to get the courses they need to graduate on time. Our grad assistants teach excellent courses and provide important mentorship to undergraduates. I know this because my administrative position is the complaint department for dissatisfied students and I hear the praise and testimonials that our undergraduate majors pass along to me...and very little criticism. Graduate assistants—whether they are teaching, administrative, or research assistants, enable our universities to move students through to completion of their degrees, assist units to manage their workload, and professors to supervise life-changing research programs. The university could not meet its obligations to the State of Maryland without these crucial employees.

Permit me a last anecdote. Last March, one of my students looked to be in ill health and fainted while walking across the campus. It turned out that her pallid demeanor and fainting spell (not the only one) was caused by extreme hunger. Her family had had extra expenses—a car repair and a required expense for a child in public school--and she did not have enough money for food, once the expenses were paid out of her meager stipend. It is important to remember the sacrifices our students are making for their education. Our grad students are human beings: daughters, sons, mothers, sisters, fathers, brothers who work hard at their jobs and hard at their studies.

For all these reasons, graduate employees need and must have collective bargaining rights. They are critical workers on our campuses and they deserve a stipend they can live on, dignity, and the means to report and remedy exploitation. I urge you to please support SB 658.

Sincerely,

Mary Corbin Sies
Ph.D., Department of American Studies
Associate Professor and Director of Undergraduate Studies
24 Lakeside Drive, Greenbelt, MD 20770
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Rob Dalka

Uploaded by: Dalka, Robert

Position: FAV

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 SB 658, and to reverse the ban on collective bargaining rights for graduate students at all schools in the University of Maryland system.

When I was first visiting the University of Maryland, and in the middle of deciding where to attend graduate school, I was surprised to find out that the graduate students were not unionized. I had already visited other Big 10 universities, specifically Michigan State University. The graduate students there emphasized how well the graduate student union had advocated on their behalf and brought stability to both their lives and jobs. The cost of living in East Lansing, MI is \$23,543, 1 Adult, 0 Children. The cost of living in Prince George's County, MD is \$36,492, 1 Adult, 0 Children (these numbers are from the MIT Living Wage Calculator (<https://livingwage.mit.edu/>)). I was offered \$5,000 less in my stipend from the University of Maryland when compared to Michigan State University. The lack of a graduate student union at the University of Maryland, and the disproportionate pay to cost of living, weighed on my decision and almost pushed me to attend graduate school elsewhere. However, the research opportunities offered to me here, at Maryland, were too great for me to pass up.

Halfway through my first year in graduate school, I have not started research, and I am funded through a Teaching Assistantship. In this appointment, I am expected to work 20 hours a week. I almost always exceed this expectation. Between in person hours with students (10 hours a week), prep meetings with course instructors (2 hours a week), and grading (typically 10 hours a week), the only times I do not go over a combined 20 hours a week are when there is a lighter week than normal. I recognize that this is a very specific example, some of my fellow graduate students teach courses that require less of them, but there are also graduate students that have more responsibilities in their Teaching Assistantship. There have been various efforts within my specific department, Physics, to address this issue. However, the students asking for change are at an inherent disadvantage due to the power structures at play. The department does not have to negotiate with graduate students, if they change anything it is because the faculty advocates for it. Due to this uneven power dynamic, the solution to the over working of Teaching Assistants is an "Expectations" document that Teaching Assistants and the instructor they work with fill out and agree to at the beginning of the semester. However, there is no requirement that this is completed, or any formal method for addressing when the agreement is broken. The instructors I have worked for have never brought up the idea of completing this form with me, I have always had to ask them to do it. Other Teaching Assistants may have not done this if they were in the

same position as me, again due to the power dynamics at play. This leads to many Teaching Assistants in the Physics department being overworked without a way to resolve their situation.

The lack of collective bargaining rights for graduate students is an analogous situation, but on a larger scale. As graduate students, we can *ask* for better cost of living increases, we can *ask* for better support and more fair labor practices, we can *ask* for equitable treatment of students, but we have no power to actually negotiate these requests. The *administration* can decide to sit down with us, *they* can decide if they will listen to us, *they* can decide if anything changes. But the graduate students have no power to negotiate anything. This leads to instability in our lives and leaves us helpless in our position within the University.

Graduate students should have the right to negotiate our position within the University. We are employees, but without the right for us to negotiate with the administration, we are seen more as a resource without a voice in our employment. I ask that you please support SB 658, and empower us graduate students to have a say in our terms of employment and allow us to bring more stability to our lives.

Sincerely,

Robert Dalka
PhD, Department of Physics
Teaching Assistant
1531 W Falkland Ln, Apt 240, Silver Spring MD 20910
rpdalka@umd.edu

Hal Daumé

Uploaded by: Daume III, Hal

Position: FAV

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,

Graduate students are the lifeblood of research and education at the University of Maryland. So much of my own success as a Professor is due to the dedication, insights, and hard work of the graduate students I have had the pleasure of working with over the past 14 years of my career. Without them, nothing would get done.

And yet, according to MIT's Living Wage calculator, the amount that an individual must earn in the State of Maryland to support themselves is \$31,366.40 per year. In Prince George's County, it is \$36,483.20 per year. How much do our best-paid graduate students get paid in the Computer Science department? About \$27,000 per year, assuming they receive "double pay" over the summer. Not only is this substantially lower than their living wage; not only is this bordering on poverty level in a rather expensive county; not only is this substantially lower than many competing graduate programs; it is substantially lower than they deserve, and they deserve the right to fight for better wages and better working conditions.

Graduate students make research run. The vast majority of work that supports the \$667 million in extramural funding that came into UMD last year is done by graduate students. More than that, with our increasing student enrollments and non-increasing faculty levels, graduate students are, more than ever, tasked with not just the research side of success, but also in running teaching programs, teaching classes, and even providing administrative support, often in ways that do not help their own careers.

I strongly support SB 658; it will make our graduate students stronger and happier, which will make our university stronger.

Sincerely,

Hal Daumé III
Ph.D., Computer Science, 2006
Perotto Chair Professor
4150 Iribe Center, University of Maryland, College Park, MD 20742
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Alexander Dunphy

Uploaded by: Dunphy, Alexander

Position: FAV

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Brian J. Feldman, Vice Chair
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SB 658
Supporting

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

I am writing in support of SB 658 Graduate Assistant Collective Bargaining Fairness Act. As a history PhD student, I look to the past to understand the present, and to understand the situation with graduate student we need to look at its origins. The graduate school model is based upon the apprenticeship/master model of the middle ages. According to this model, an apprentice is assigned to a master craftsman and performs labor in exchange for knowledge of the craft. After a time, the apprentice would graduate to journeyman, still working under the master for a number of years, until he was deemed worthy to become a master himself. Despite the grueling and often unpaid labor required from the apprentice, this system worked because at the end of process apprentices were almost guaranteed to economic security. And so did academia for a time, but that is not the case anymore, and that is one of the main reasons we are currently seeing such a push towards collective bargaining for grad students.

While graduate student labor has become more exploitative in recent decades, the situation has been worsened by the fact that graduate workers no longer can expect to rise to the tops of their professions after their degree completion. In the last few decades, higher education (particularly the arts and humanities) has been decimated. The job prospects for much of academia plummeted as tenured-faculty positions have been slashed. Gone are the days of when an academic job meant security and a high standard of living. For many, even the prospect of a job in their field is increasingly out of their grasp. And that is why we are seeing such a push toward graduate student collective bargaining. The bargain has become unfair and graduate students are no longer willing to put up with the insecurity, mistreatment, poverty, and powerlessness for the majority of their young adult years while training for a career that might never come.

While for many graduate workers this is a deeply personal issue, the exploitation of graduate labor is also part the larger problem affecting colleges and universities. In order to cut tenured positions, more and more labor has been shifted to low-paid and over-worked contingency faculty and graduate workers. The exploitation of graduate workers is not an accident, but an essential part of the neoliberalization of academia. Not only are graduate workers being exploited but universities are making us unwilling participants in our own exploitation and career destruction.

Something needs to be done to reverse the declining trajectory of higher education. The first step in that process is to accurately classify graduate workers as workers and allow us the right to advocate for ourselves through collective bargaining by passing SB 658 Graduate Assistant

Collective Bargaining Fairness Act. Only then will we have the tools necessary to begin to fight for economic justice and security for ourselves and have any hope of stemming the tide of exploitation in higher education.

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Dunphy
PhD, Department of History, UMCP
Teaching Assistant
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4282 Chapel Ln.
College Park, MD 20742
adunphy@terpmail.umd.edu

MDDCAFLCIO_FAV_SB658

Uploaded by: Edwards, Donna

Position: FAV



MARYLAND STATE & D.C. AFL-CIO

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**SB 658 - Higher Education - Collective Bargaining - Graduate Assistants (Graduate Assistant Collective Bargaining Fairness Act)
Senate Finance Committee
February 21, 2020**

SUPPORT

**Donna S. Edwards
President
Maryland State and DC AFL-CIO**

Madam Chair and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support SB 658 - Higher Education - Collective Bargaining - Graduate Assistants (Graduate Assistant Collective Bargaining Fairness Act). On behalf of the 340,000 union members I submit the following comments.

Currently, the University of Maryland system considers Graduate Assistants (GA) as students, not workers. This, unfortunately, means that GAs do not have the right to collectively bargain for better wages and benefits. The “meet and confer” process – a University compromise meant to mollify students who fought for collective bargaining in 2012 – has failed to address key concerns of Graduate Assistants, mainly on issues of stipends, intellectual property rights, and family leave. The only way for workers to fully realize their rights in the workplace is by bargaining with their employers. Graduate Assistants at the University System of Maryland, St. Mary’s College of Maryland, and Morgan State University, need and have earned the right to collectively bargain.

Collective bargaining for college students is not new, unique, or different. Currently, thirty universities, including the University of Wisconsin, University of Michigan, University of Illinois, and the University of California at Berkeley have collective bargaining for graduate assistants. These are universities that – in the case of Wisconsin – have had collective bargaining rights for student workers for decades. Far from seeing any ill effects that are constantly promulgated by those who oppose collective bargaining, these universities are thriving, and the student workers on their campuses have the additional protections afforded them through speaking with one voice at the bargaining table.

It is time to give Graduate Assistants a say in their working conditions. It is time to give them the right to collectively bargain for themselves, and for these reasons, we urge a favorable vote on SB 658

Jason Fan SB 658 Testimony

Uploaded by: Fan, Jason

Position: FAV

Delores G. Kelley, Chair, 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,

My name is Jason Fan, a PhD student in the Computer Science Department. As a former Teaching and Research Assistant (TA/RA) who will need a TAship in the future, I am writing in vigorous opposition to UMD's current position against the unionization of Graduate Assistants. As an RA and TA, my contributions to UMD and my department directly help:

- a) Professors in my department apply for multi-million dollar grants
- b) Professors in my department educate undergraduates with basic computer science skills.

We are reasonably demanding the right to unionize - a right available to almost every workforce in this country. Dean Fetter's archaic statement that we are simply "trainees" who TA and RA as part of "training" demeans us. In fact, I would argue that most PhD students are measured by their research output (which in turn brings millions of dollars in funding to this institution), not our "training" as TAs/GAs.

Our work and contribution is fundamental to the operation of this university. **Peer reviewed** studies directly counter Dean Steve Fetter's claims made in his Jan 28, 2020 testimony (Rogers et al. ILR Review, 2013). **Full-time tenure track faculty (Hal Daume III and Jordan Boyd-Graber) in my department also support unionization, and, unlike UMD's current position, recognize the value of a healthy graduate student workforce.**

Sincerely,

Jason Fan
PhD Student, Computer Science CMNS
Former Teaching and Research Assistant
Center for Bioinformatics and Computational Biology,
Brendan Iribe Center, Rm 3112,
8125 Paint Branch Drive, MD 20740
jasonfan@cs.umd.edu

Kwok Lung Fan

Uploaded by: Fan, Kwok Lung

Position: FAV

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 to express my support to the Graduate Assistant Collective Bargaining Fairness Act (HB 214). I am a first year Ph.D. student in the department of Physics, University of Maryland. Graduate Assistant being underpaid is not an uncommon thing in the United States. While many states in this country had ensured the collective bargaining right for grad students, it is absent for Maryland, one of the most developed states in the US. Without my explanation and evidence, how the labor Union had helped protect the rights of workers is a known fact and there is no reason such right is not protected for graduate workers. As an important group of the university, graduate student workers ensure the quality of teaching and research of the university. We worked hard but we kept struggling to live. The right of graduate workers cannot rely on gestures of the university admins just like the right of workers cannot rely on gestures of the capitalists, even the working conditions are great now. Our right should be protected by the law and therefore we sincerely hope it will be the case. Please accept my sincere apology for sparing your time to read the letter.

Sincerely,

Kwok Lung Fan
Ph.D. candidate, Physics
Research Assistant
2117 Physical Science Complex, University of Maryland
Fkt8356@gmail.com

Charlie Fanning_FAV_SB658

Uploaded by: Fanning, Charlie

Position: FAV

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,

As a PhD candidate in history and University of Maryland teaching assistant, I am writing in support of SB 658. When I first entered the history department at the University of Maryland three years ago, I was caught off guard by the poor working conditions of graduate workers. While our work makes the University of Maryland a top institution of higher learning and ensures that students achieve positive learning outcomes, we are not recognized as workers and are limited in exercising our rights. The current system is unsustainable and is driving talented teachers and scholars away from the University.

We work far more hours than we are contractually obligated to and receive poverty-level wages in return. Many people have to moonlight in outside jobs, or overload their hours at the University to the detriment of their research to meet the high cost of living in the Baltimore-Washington Metro area. While our contracts limit our hours to 20 a week, I have personally worked 50-60 hours in certain points in the semester, between leading discussion sections for over 70 students, grading exams and papers, and responding to student inquiries and meeting requests. I also regularly take on outside work to make ends meet.

Currently, at UMD we have no grievance procedure, no recourse to an HR department, no ability to take sick days, and no say in the terms of our employment. At a time when there is increasing attention on equality in the workplace, it is shameful that the University of Maryland system would allow this state of affairs to persist.

With this bill, we are asking for the same right to collectively bargain as other workers. We need to meet with the administration on equal footing to improve conditions. I urge you to vote to legally recognize graduate student employees' right to choose to collectively bargain. By recognizing the voices of graduate workers, assistant-supervisor relationships, teaching performance, and research would improve to the benefit of the entire student body.

Sincerely,

Charlie Fanning
Teaching Assistant/ PhD Candidate, Department of History
1151 W. Cross St. Baltimore, MD 21230
Fanning@umd.edu

Nic Galloway

Uploaded by: Galloway, Nic

Position: FAV

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 would like to express my unconditional support of HB 214 and to implore the members of this committee to support it as well.

I presently serve as a Graduate Assistant (GA) at the University of Maryland's Anthropology Department. As a student/employee, the capacity and definitions of my duties are often ill-defined and seemingly boundless. My responsibilities at any given time can include a combination of teaching, mentoring, research, data entry, administrative work, travel, fieldwork, peer review, editing, conference preparation, and more; all of which is solely covered under my graduate stipend without consideration to the amount of hours logged or the quality of the work provided. It is not an anomaly for a GA in my department to perform their graduate duties akin to the approach of a full-time professional job, and for younger grad students, this is in tandem with a rigorous course load.

A prominent example of how rigged this system is against graduate students is the discrepancy between paid hours and worked hours for 9 month assistantships. The law requires that we are paid as "part-time" researchers/TA's during the school year (Sept – May), receiving pay for only 20 hours per week. In my department and across the graduate school, our advisors expect, nay demand that we work more than that for our various projects, so it ends up being closer to 40-60 hours per week. Because we do not have a system of organizing, graduate assistants have no serious recourse of accountability for advisors that exploit the free labor of their pupils, nor do we have the ability to obtain compensation accurately to the true amount of labor we provide. All of this has drastic effects, severely weakening our resolve as a group and damaging our personal lives and mental health. Graduate students deserve the right to effectively advocate for ourselves and to work at our universities with dignity and prosperity, which can only be truly achieved through leveraging our shared interests as a collective body.

The University of Maryland and all public graduate programs in this state would not be able to operate without the labor of its graduate student workforce, and as such, we deserve the ability - as all working members of society do - to organize on behalf of our collective interests. Year after year, we secure a vast array of monies and accolades on behalf of our respective universities; and yet, despite our significance, this institution has stood in the way of our capacity to achieve a fair standard of living and an equitable share of the resources obtained as a result of

our labor. I believe wholeheartedly that through acquiring the right to collectively bargain and formalize our labor through a 3rd party representative, that graduate assistants, the academic community, and the entire State of Maryland will benefit as a result.

Sincerely,

Nicholas Galloway
Phd Student, Anthropology
Research Assistant
2705 Lake Avenue, Cheverly, MD, 20785
nickg596@gmail.com

Florian Gawehns

Uploaded by: Gawehns, Florian

Position: FAV

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,

My name is Florian Gawehns. I am a first/year PhD student in the government and politics program at UMD. I am also a teaching assistant like many others who have provided testimony to this committee.

Many of us are not paid a living wage. It is hard to commit to a full-time graduate program while not having the means to support yourself financially. Since we are expected to produce professional quality work, we should be compensated accordingly. If Maryland wants to stay an attractive destination for the next generation of scientists then it should take a stand and support any improvement in the working conditions of graduate students. Maryland is a beacon of hope in a dysfunctional and polarized national political environment. It should signal its willingness to support higher education by all means necessary.

Arguments against unionization do not hold water. Recent research suggests that unionization neither negatively affects academic freedom nor harms faculty-student relationships. Unionization is an important instrument to improve the conditions for young scholars and provide graduate students with a voice in our working conditions and in the future of work on campus.

I urge you to support SB 658, a bill that will give us the right to collectively bargain.

Sincerely,

Florian Gawehns, M.A.
PhD student Government & Politics
Teaching Assistant
8109 Garland Ave, Unit 6, MD-20912
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UMCES

Uploaded by: Goethel, Christina

Position: FAV



University of Maryland
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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,

Hello, my name is Christina Goethel and I am the Chair of the Graduate Student Council at the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science. In my almost three years of sitting on the council and six years at the institution, interacting with faculty and administration has been generally positive. We have had a good relationship and feel that we legitimately have a voice in decisions at the Center level. It is true, however, that this is not always the case across the system. Indeed in the future this may not be the case at UMCES. We feel that not only current, but future research assistants can highly benefit from institutional. Legal protection from the unlikely, but potentially harmful circumstance of an adversarial relationship between administration, faculty, and graduate research assistants.

The UMCES Graduate Student Council supports legislation to allow Graduate Research Assistants within the system of Maryland the ability to collectively bargain. Although the UMCES GSC has a very positive and beneficial relationship with the administration and faculty, we feel that having future protections in place that would afford graduate students more flexibility in their employment relationship would be positive. Legislation that gives graduate student assistants the full privileges of Maryland employees will be positive for all parties involved.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Christina Goethel".

Christina Goethel
Chair, Graduate Student Council
University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science

David Van Horn

Uploaded by: Greene, Daniel

Position: FAV

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,

Graduate students are the lifeblood of every research university. Ask any faculty member to tell you who does the actual work of advancing knowledge in their field and they invariably say: graduate students. Yet despite their central role in the work of a university, they are consistently exploited. They deserve basic rights as workers and collective bargaining to combat this exploitation.

I am writing today, just as I did a year ago, to express my strongest support for HB0214/SB0658 and urge the Maryland Legislature and Governor to legally recognize graduate assistants as employees of the University System of Maryland.

In particular, I strongly support graduate workers rights to include:

- Legal contracts
- Social security benefits
- Collective bargaining on employment conditions

I am joined by a broad coalition of graduate student government organizations, including the UMCP Graduate Student Government, The Diamondback Editorial Board, and the Computer Science Graduate Student Executive Council, and many others.

It is well documented that USM graduate assistants are not paid a living wage and 69% of GAs report their salary being insufficient. GAs also consistently work more than their university limit of 20 hours per week, which constitutes systematic wage theft. The Associate Provost and Dean of the Graduate School at UMCP, Steve Fetter, seemingly acknowledged and endorsed this widespread wage theft in his testimony to the Maryland House Appropriations Committee, saying “Doing original research and scholarship is not an easy thing, and it requires long hours, regardless of whether you have an assistantship or not.”

Fetter also made much of the unique relationship between graduate students and their faculty mentors, which is indeed a special and important relationship. But I would like to stress that the primary relationship between the university and graduate assistants is one of employer and employee, and that the mentor-mentee relationship can survive only if it is entered into in good faith and on equitable terms. It is absurd to think that recognizing the legal rights of GAs as workers would somehow compromise the relationship between faculty and graduate students. On the contrary it is *necessary* for it to work at all.

I would also like to express my deep concern over aspects of Fetter's testimony to the Maryland House Appropriations Committee from last year, during which he cited tuition remission toward student income. Not only is this completely misleading: (1) tuition remission is not income, nor is it considered income for any other university employees who receive it, (2) graduate students pay tuition, which is remitted via assistantships, throughout their tenure as graduate students, even though they usually stop taking classes after the first two years of their graduate degree, and (3) Fetter cited **out-of-state** tuition figures, even though he is well aware of the fact that graduate students are charged (the significantly lower) in-state rates. Every faculty member who has written a grant application (effectively: everyone) knows this. It's one thing for the Dean of the Graduate School to argue against the rights of his constituents. It is quite another to do so in bad faith and with knowingly false testimony.

On a final note, I ask the Finance Committee to take note of the current situation at the University of California at Santa Cruz. By not paying graduate workers a living wage adjusted to the rapidly rising cost of living, the university has been essentially shut down by a graduate worker strike. In fact, the whole University of California System seems at risk. Intimidation and threats from the administration have soured relations with students, workers, faculty, and alumni. Potentially irreparable damage has already occurred. I urge the committee to see proper recognition of graduate workers as university employees as a first, but significant, step toward avoiding the UC situation coming to Maryland.

Sincerely,

David Van Horn
PhD, Department of Computer Science & UMIACS
Associate Professor
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Valerie Hall

Uploaded by: Hall, Valerie

Position: FAV

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 write today urging you to support SB 658, which would provide graduate students at the University of Maryland (UMD) the right to organize and choose to collectively bargain. As per my graduate teaching assistantship contract for this academic year, I am making \$18,979 over the term of my appointment – well below the estimated annual cost of living in the region.

My colleagues and I, having given up well-paying positions in the outside world to bring our passion and talents to research and teaching at this university, are being overworked and underpaid. We have no grievance procedure, no HR channels through which to work, and no recourse to address basic inequalities, like an inability to take sick days or to refuse requests from supervisors and administrators for fear refusal would lead to punitive measures, including the loss of our funding. Those of us who are parents experience additional stress in trying to support our families on a meager income while trying to negotiate sick days not only for ourselves, but also so that we might care for our children during their illnesses.

Graduate students' work at the university suffers due to our inability to produce good outcomes when trying to keep up with unrealistic assigned workloads to the detriment of our teaching, personal research, and quality of life. Additionally, we are continuously stressed over our financial situation. These conditions create ripple effects, impacting undergraduate student learning and research outcomes across the university.

I urge lawmakers to support SB 658, with the knowledge that improving conditions for graduate students will improve the overall quality of academics and research across the university. Improving conditions for graduate students will also make graduate programs at UMD more attractive to future students, raising the overall caliber of departments across the university and helping to improve the economy of the state of Maryland.

We have chosen to pursue our graduate studies within the University System of Maryland, contributing our talents to teaching and research at UMD instead of any other university here or internationally. We ask in return that the General Assembly of Maryland afford us the respect it has afforded many other state employees in giving us the right to organize and collectively bargain. Again, I urge lawmakers to support SB 658, which would allow us to present concerns

to the university through formal channels, giving graduate students a voice in creating equitable and supportive living conditions for all.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Valerie Hall
PhD Student, Anthropology
Teaching Assistant
B0104B Taliaferro Bldg
College Park, MD 20742
vhall@umd.edu

Christina B. Hanhardt

Uploaded by: Hanhardt, Christina

Position: FAV

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 to express my strongest support of the right of graduate student workers to collectively bargain, and to encourage you to bring Senate Bill 658 to a vote. Graduate student employees at the University of Maryland provide crucial, extensive, and diverse labor in the form of research, teaching, and administrative tasks that are all essential to the operation of this university. The State of Maryland has already recognized the right of other workers at our state university to collectively bargain. The exclusion of workers who are also graduate students is unacceptable, and should be immediately corrected.

The right to collectively bargain is now an established right of graduate student workers in states that are home to the country's top-ranking public research universities – such as California, Michigan, Illinois, Washington, and New Jersey. These universities include existing and aspirational peer institutions for the University of Maryland, as well as fellow members of the Big Ten. They also join many other states, such as Massachusetts, Connecticut, New York, Iowa, Oregon, and our neighboring state of Delaware in recognizing this important right. Leading private elite universities such as Columbia University and New York University also recognize this shared right of *all* private and public sector workers.

At these universities, it has been shown that a recognized and respected work force benefits not only workers but also the educational experience of its students **and** the status of its research record. Indeed, I served for five of the past seven years as Director of Graduate Studies in my department, and we have lost many of our top recruits to our program in favor of those at the University of California, University of Michigan, Rutgers University, and New York University in large part due to the kind of support these schools offer to an organized and recognized graduate student work force. There is no contradiction that graduate students are both students and workers, in this case at the same institution; the contradiction is only that the latter status is denied, eroding the integrity of the university itself.

If the University of Maryland wants to maintain and even improve its status among the ranks of the best universities in this country, it is imperative that it too recognize all of its workers. This is particularly important at this historic moment, in which workers' rights are being put on the line on a federal level. It is crucial that states like Maryland stand up and reiterate their long-standing support for **all** of the people who live and work there, and to provide a strong, forward-thinking model that will continue to demonstrate Maryland's status as a leader. And the next step is to bring SB 658 to a vote. Thank you.

Sincerely,
Christina Hanhardt
Associate Professor, Department of American Studies, University of Maryland
(provided for identification purposes only)

Yeming Hao

Uploaded by: Hao, Yeming

Position: FAV

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 a graduate student and graduate research assistant at the University of Maryland. I write to you today to urge your support on SB 658.

I support this bill because collective bargaining operates as an effective means to address cost of living and employment concerns. In absence of these rights, student employees are unable to formally and bindingly negotiate with the university to address labor and employment issues.

UMD's minimum graduate assistant stipend is lower than every single flagship campus except for the University of Nebraska, when compared with estimated cost of living. My fellow students and I are struggling under severe financial stress while fulfilling our study and work tasks.

If you have any further questions or need any additional information, please feel free to contact me at yhao@umd.edu.

Thank you for your time.

Yours sincerely,

Yeming Hao
Graduate Research Assistant & PhD Candidate
Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering
3117 A.V. Williams
University of Maryland
College Park, MD 20742
Email: yhao@umd.edu

Howell_Pro_SB658

Uploaded by: Howell, Will

Position: FAV



Bill: Senate Bill 658 (HB 214)
Title: Graduate Assistant Collective
Bargaining Fairness Act
Date: February 21, 2020
Committee: Senate Finance
Position: SUPPORT

A. The problems have persisted across generations of graduate students, legislators, and administrators (p. 2).

- Over the last 20 years there have been numerous attempts to reverse the 2001 ban.
- Minimum stipends have hardly increased during that time.
- UMCP data shows pervasiveness of issues facing graduate employees.

B. The meet and confer process is not working (p. 5).

- Despite the best efforts of graduate employee leaders, university administration has been largely unresponsive to graduate employee concerns and issues.

C. On employment measures, University of Maryland does not stack up well against our peer schools (p. 7).

- UMCP's minimum graduate stipend is below many Big Ten and peer schools'.
- UMCP has one of the highest discrepancies between cost-of-living and stipend amongst our peer institutions.
- More than 50% of Big Ten schools are unionized.

D. Collective bargaining does not harm, and instead benefits, the educational atmosphere (p. 8).

- Peer-reviewed research suggests graduate student unionization actually improves the educational atmosphere.

E. There is broad, continuously expressed support among graduate employees (p. 10).

- Thousands of graduate employees, faculty, and campus groups across USM institutions have advocated for the legalization of collective bargaining rights for the last several years.

Testimony from Fearless Student Employees in support of HB214/SB658. Inquiries for further data or questions can be directed to fearlessstudentemployees@gmail.com.

The problems have persisted across generations of graduate students, legislators, and administrators.

Numerous bills have dealt with graduate employee collective bargaining over the last twenty years:

2000: HB 1361
 2001: HB 300 / SB 207 — Ban on grad employees collective bargaining enters statute
 2002: HB 604
 2008: HB 538 / SB 617
 2012: HB 972 / SB 859
 2017: HB 1250
 2018: HB 199 / SB 560
 2019: HB 270 / SB 491
 2020: HB 214

The minimum annual stipend a department might pay its graduate employees for a standard position has increased, but barely—and after stagnating for four years:

2013: \$15,067.00	<u>2016: \$16,144.00</u>	2019: \$17,455.00
2014: \$15,675.00	<u>2017: \$16,144.00</u>	2020: \$18,791.00
<u>2015: \$16,144.00</u>	<u>2018: \$16,144.00</u>	

University committees, surveys, and other data consistently demonstrate the pervasiveness of issues facing graduate employees:

Unlivable Wages...

In 2010, the workgroup “on the status of graduate assistants and adjunct faculty in Maryland's state higher education institutions” concluded “Graduate students addressing the Workgroup expressed the concern that stipends are low, relative to the cost of living in Maryland. They also cited economic concerns, the financial uncertainty that arises without multi-year assistantship commitments, and the dearth of affordable graduate student housing.” (9)

In 2016, UMCP GAAC surveyed and found 69% of respondents said their salary is not enough to support themselves.

In 2016, the Graduate School Review Committee determined, “Our data indicate that graduate students often feel overworked and undercompensated, and that the University does not provide enough mechanisms to address their concerns (though the new Statement of Mutual Expectations for Graduate Assistants and Faculty Supervisors is a step in the right direction). Appropriate financial support and expectations are crucial for allowing graduate students to focus on their

academics, and can enhance recruitment, particularly for the highest quality students and those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

In 2017, the Graduate School's Quality of Life Survey showed that the top reason why graduate students would NOT recommend UMCP to prospective students was financial issues/concerns. Financial issues were the top reason why graduate students and employees felt unsupported by the university.

Unregulated hours...

In 2006, a survey at UMCP found that 36% of respondent teaching assistants asserted that they worked more than the maximum allowed by Graduate School policies (20). (10 of Workgroup report)

In 2010, UMCP told the workgroup it "believes that it has solved this significant workload inequity." (10)

In 2016, UMCP GAAC found 20% of respondents said they could not complete the requirements of their assistantship within the policy-limited time, and that the *average* number of hours worked (22.56) exceeded the maximum allowed by Graduate School policies (20).

In 2017, UMCP GAAC surveyed and found that the *average* number of hours worked (27.11) exceeded the maximum allowed by Graduate School policies (20).

In 2017, the Graduate School's Quality of Life Survey found significant dissatisfaction with overwhelming assistantship workloads, particularly given the comparatively low stipends.

In 2020, the Graduate School facilitated a study by Dr. Liana Sayer that suggested a vast range between colleges, with some colleges' graduate employees working nearly twice as many hours as other colleges employees doing similar work.

Issues with supervisors...

In 2010, graduate employees expressed concern that grievance procedures "leave the complaining student vulnerable to retaliation from the student's supervisor or mentor." (11)

In 2016, UMCP surveyed and found 22.8% of respondents would not be comfortable approaching their advisor/supervisor about a problem.

In 2017, the Graduate School's Quality of Life Survey found that many graduate students felt unsupported by program faculty and their advisors. Some even reported issues with faculty engaging in sexism, harassment, and exploitation. Issues with faculty were frequently reported as a reason why graduate students would not recommend UMCP to prospective students.

In 2019, the graduate school policies make us "first attempt to resolve the difficulty by discussing the situation with [our] faculty advisor/supervisor as expeditiously as possible."

Inadequate policies...

In 2010, graduate students complained that "informal, department-based processes are inadequate" to resolve issues. (11)

In 2016, UMCP surveyed and found a full 41.1% of respondents were either neutral, or felt insufficiently protected by Graduate School policies.

In 2017, the Graduate School's Quality of Life survey showed that respondents felt that graduate students and employees were devalued by their programs and the university, citing a lack of policies, programs, and resources that support graduate student life.

In 2019, our current grievance policies states, "the GA should attempt to resolve these matters locally, collegially, and informally."

In 2019, the Graduate School found that 27% of graduate employees did not have their required expectations setting meeting and Dean Steve Fetter said, "the[se] results were positive" in an email to stakeholders.

Lack of communication...

In 2010, the workgroup advised that, "Strong channels of communication must exist on every campus to encourage the open exchange of information and discussion of concerns between graduate assistants, faculty and administrators." (14)

In 2016, the Graduate School Review Committee determined the Graduate School needed to "improve communication about policies and services to faculty, staff and students."

In 2017, the Graduate School's Quality of Life Survey showed widespread dissatisfaction with communication between the university and the graduate community, and individual programs and their students. The survey showed concern about the consistent "lack of transparency" in decision-making.

In 2018, UMCP GAAC asked Dean Steve Fetter to communicate better and he responded, "students and faculty share responsibility for being informed, and helping to inform others."

Failure of shared governance...

In 2010, the workgroup was unsure "whether campus shared governance policies, processes, and practices...are adequate to resolve concerns of graduate assistants." (13)

In 2016, the Graduate School Review Committee determined the Graduate School had failed to "engage graduate faculty, students, DGSs and Coordinators, and other core constituencies on an ongoing basis in discussions of major issues in graduate education (e.g., time to degree)."

In 2017, findings from the Graduate School's Quality of Life Survey showed that "lack of voice" was a significant concern for graduate students and employees. Many felt that they had no way of addressing issues in their academic programs, workplaces, or at the university in general.

References:

Health & Time Use of UMD Graduate Students - Dr. Liana Sayer (initial findings)

[Graduate School Policies](#) - Graduate School, UMCP

[Graduate Student Quality of Life Survey \(2017\)](#) - Graduate School, UMCP

Graduate School Review Committee (2016) - UMCP

Graduate Assistant Advisory Council Survey (2016) - GAAC, UMCP

The meet and confer process is not working.

Dean	GAAC MEETING	Economic livability (salary, housing)	Parental resources for GA's (childcare, leave issues)	Training / preparation / expectations	IP Rights	Issues with international student employment / training	Sick and Bereavement Leave	Issues with GAAC processes	Information Gathering	Grievance Policy Issues
Dean Charles Caramello	2/4/2013	x	x	x	x	x				
	5/28/2013	x	x	x	x		x			
	12/11/2013		x	x	x	x				
	04/07/2014		x		x	x				
	12/04/2014	x	x	x		x		x		
	04/28/2015	x	x	x				x		
	11/30/2015			x	x			x		
	04/28/2016	x		x	x	x		x	x	
Dean Jeff Franke	11/30/2016	x	x	x	x		x		x	x
	4/17/2017	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Dean Steve Fetter	12/14/2017	x		x	x		x	x	x	x
	5/3/2018	x		x			x	x	x	x
	11/28/2018	x		x			x	x	x	x

Illustrative exchanges from two GAAC meetings:

Issues with the offer letters admitted students receive

GAAC asked: can the Graduate School “audit offer letters to ensure they aren’t making promises that violate Grad School policies?”

They responded: “The Graduate School does not have the resources to review individual offer letters for 4,400 graduate assistants. Moreover, offers are often done via email or verbally, without formal documentation. We rely on departments to comply with Graduate School policies.”

Lack of progress on gathering background data

GAAC said: “The Grad School lacks a comprehensive, quantitative and qualitative, understanding of the condition of graduate employees. GAAC has attempted to gather this data, the grad school has generally not, and GAAC’s numbers and qualitative data are often called into question.” (5/3/18)

They responded: “I invite GAAC to request data from the Graduate School, rather than attempt to collect it independently.” (5/3/18)

But then, regarding specific requests for information, “the Graduate School does not have the resources to develop, purchase, maintain, or support a replacement system [that tracks comprehensive graduate student information].” (5/3/18)

GAAC said: “We are concerned that you do not really know what grad employees workload is, nor how that is changing.” (11/28/18)

They responded: “We will provide information on trends on the number of graduate assistants and GA stipends when a research analyst is available to do the analysis... With current student information systems, the Graduate School does not have the ability or capacity to require, collect, monitor, or store offer letters or contracts.” No commitment when a research analyst will be available. (11/28/18)

Regarding Statements of Mutual Expectations

GAAC asked: “What are you doing to make sure that the new policy language is followed, and initiated by supervisors rather than graduate employees?”

They responded: “Departments are responsible for implementing the policy. Graduate assistants share responsibility, with their supervisors, for knowing the policy and ensuring it is implemented properly.”

Regarding poor salaries

GAAC asked: “What are your next steps to bringing grad salaries in line with cost of living?”

They responded: “The average academic-year stipend is currently \$20,023; this will increase to over \$21,000 next year—equivalent to about \$30 per hour. Graduate assistants also receive tuition worth up to \$30,000 per year and the same health benefits that faculty and staff receive. In addition, many graduate assistants also receive supplementary fellowship funding—an average of roughly \$2,000 per doctoral student. Total compensation exceeds \$60,000 for a half-time, 9.5-month appointment.”

**The University of Maryland does not stack up
well against peer institutions.**

Institution	Unionized?	Required Annual Income For One Adult	Minimum annual GA Salary (20 hrs/wk.)	Maximum Hours Per Week, per policy
Northwestern University	In process	\$27,739	\$32,844	20
University of California, Berkeley	Yes - UAW	\$36,331	\$27,218 (9-month)	21.25 per week* (340 hrs/semester)
University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA)	Yes (UAW)	\$29,864	\$27,726	~21.25 per week* (340 hrs/semester)
University of Wisconsin	Yes (TAA)	\$25,873	\$20,500	~22.5 per week (360 hrs/semester)
Rutgers University	Yes (AFT)	\$29,281	\$28,569	15
University of Michigan	Yes (AFT)	\$27,536	\$32,668.50	20*
Penn State University	No	\$25,675	\$17,280	
University of Iowa	Yes (UE)	\$23,872	\$23,982	20*
University of Washington	Yes (UAW)	\$31,295	\$28,656	~21.25 per week* (220 hrs/quarter)
Ohio State University	No	\$23,334	\$16,515	
University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign	Yes (AFT)	\$24,548	\$23,717.28	20*
UMD, College Park	No	\$36,492	\$23,736	20
University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill	No	\$25,272	\$15,700	15-20 (recommended)
University of Minnesota	No	\$25,669	\$20,456.50	
Purdue University	No	\$23,708	\$20,358	20*
Michigan State University	Yes (AFT)	\$23,543	\$15,408	20*
University of Nebraska	No	\$23,330	\$10,000	20*
University of Indiana	No	\$24,453	\$9,914 (10 month)	No information

(Numbers from MIT Cost of Living Calculator, and each school's website / contract)

*Varies by appointment (1/4, 1/2, 3/4, full).

Collective bargaining does not harm, and actually benefits, the educational atmosphere.

Selected scholarship:

Rogers, S. E., Eaton, A. E., & Voos, P. B. (2013). Effects of unionization on graduate student employees: Faculty-student relations, academic freedom, and pay. *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, 66, 487–510.

The authors use survey data collected from unionized and non-unions PhD students across five academic disciplines and eight public US universities to study whether unionization harms faculty-student relations and academic freedom. The authors found that unionization either has no impact or a positive impact on faculty–student mentoring relations, with unionized graduate employees reporting higher levels of personal and professional support than non-unionized graduate employees. The study also suggests that unionization could have a positive impact on academic freedom.

Hewitt, G. J. (2000). Graduate student employee collective bargaining and the educational relationship between faculty and graduate students. *Journal of Collective Negotiations in the Public Sector*, 29, 153–166.

This study surveyed faculty and found substantial support for unionization in higher education, as well as a strong belief that graduate assistants should be considered employees with the right to bargain to protect themselves from mistreatment. More than 90% of the respondents indicated that student bargaining did not interfere with their ability to teach or advise graduate students, and 87.9% indicated that it did not inhibit mentoring relationships.

Julius, D. J., & Gumport, P. J. (2002). Graduate student unionization: Catalysts and consequences. *Review of Higher Education*, 26, 187–216.

Using interviews, archival sources and existing scholarship, this study found no evidence that unionization negatively affects student-faculty, or mentor-mentee relationships. Rather it suggests that the clarification of roles and employment policies through collective bargaining labor agreements can enhance mentoring relationships between faculty and graduate students by clearly delineating expectations and responsibilities.

Ehrenberg, R. G., Klaff, D. B., Kezsbom, A. T., & Nagowski, M. P. (2004). Collective bargaining in American higher education. In R. G. Ehrenberg (Ed.), *Governing academia* (pp. 209–295). Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

This study used an anonymized data exchange of 29 major universities from 1996–1997 through 2000–2001. Comparing non-unionized graduate employees with graduate employees who were unionized before 1995, graduate employees who were unionized by the end of 1996, and graduate employees who were beginning in 1999. While the last group had on average the highest salaries, the authors argue that this could be explained by the fact that this group was generally located in areas with the highest cost of living. Overall, the authors concluded, “The findings suggest that the impact of graduate assistant unions on economic outcomes does not appear to be very large and that concern over graduate student unions may be overstated” (p. 230).

Schenk, T. (2010, January 17). The effects of graduate-student unionization on stipends (Working Paper Series 1831975). Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research.

Retrieved from <http://tomschenkjr.net/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2009/07/eegsu.pdf>

The author used data published in the *Chronicles of Higher Education* from 2000-2001, 2001-2002, and 2003-2004, to examine the effects of unionization on graduate employee compensation. He found that unionized teaching assistants generally have higher salaries, but not overall compensation, suggesting that higher wages might be offset by an increase in fees and a decrease in other benefits. The author also found that unionization did not increase the likelihood of health benefits, decrease inequality between departments, or improve salaries for research assistants.

There is broad, continuously expressed support among graduate employees.

Hundreds of graduate employees have submitted written testimony to you, thousands have signed our petitions asking for collective bargaining rights, and dozens of campus groups and leaders have urged your support.

USM Graduate Student Governments:

Graduate Student Government (UMCP) (2018-2020)
 Graduate Student Association (Bowie) (2018-2020)
 Graduate Student Government (UMES) (2018-2020)
 University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science (2018-2020)

USM Student Groups:

The Diamondback (2018, 2020)
 Graduate Assistant Advisory Council (UMCP) (2017-2020)
 Fearless Student Employees (UMCP) (2017-2020)
 Mechanical Engineering Graduate Students (UMCP)
 MaryPIRG (UMCP)
 College Democrats (UMCP)
 Science for the People (UMD)
 Human Resource Development Evolve Society (Bowie)

USM Campus Leaders:

Annie Rappoport - Graduate Student Government President - UMCP (2019-2020)
 Diamond Bracey - Graduate Student Government President - Bowie (2018-2019)
 Christina Goethel - Graduate Student Council President - UMCES (2020)
 Blake Clark - Graduate Student Council President - UMCES (2018-2019)
 Zoe Johnson - Graduate Student Government President - UMES (2018-2019)
 Jocelyn Simmons - Graduate Student Government President - UMES (2020)
 Jonathan Allen - Student Government President - UMCP (2019)
 Adelaida Shelley - Graduate Assistant Advisory Council Co-President - UMCP (2020)
 Alexander Dunphy - Graduate Assistant Advisory Council Co-President - UMCP (2020)
 Caden Fabbi - USM Student Council President (2018)
 Michael Goodman - Graduate Student Government President - UMCP (2018)
 Nicholas Myers - Graduate Student Association President - Towson (2018)

Number of graduate employees petitioning for collective bargaining rights:

2017-2018: 1029

2018-2019: 808

Since Jan. 17, 2020: 806

College of Agriculture and Natural Resources

Jonathan Mallory	Andrea Gilbert	Faith Taylor	Alexandre Perrault
Kristina Satterlee	Elena Bailoni	Seth Commichaux	Jeffrey Hunt
Sara Miya Do	Rishov Goswami	Alexander MacLeod	Julian Gomez-Gelvez
Sarah Turner	Shawn Tsai	Danielle Delp	Samuel Williamson
Simon Sretenovic	Aimee Malzahn	Farshid Shoushtarian	Simon Levin
Sultana Solaiman	Alison Jones	Grace Hummell	Ying Chen
Yuki Whitley	Dani Weissman	Nathan Sedghi	Chaitra Surugihalli
Ashley Strickland	Emma Podietz	Patrick Roden-Reynolds	Sai Yeddula
Shelby Foor	Hannah Savio	Sarah Rothman	Sohini Dutt
Yanli Chen	Humberto Castillo Gonzalez	Devon Mohondro	Petrina Mckenzie-Reynolds

School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation

Andrew Mazer	Kari Nye	Katherine Calvert	Lilian Murnen
Jazmin Inoa Reyes	Margaret Curran	Anna Brinley	Qiong Peng
Kira Zelnosky	Nohely Alvarez	Binbin Peng	Zhenpeng Zou
Kenneth Turcsak, Jr.	Rachael Warner	Ellen Kortesoja	Grace Davenport
Will Duggan	Jonathan Katz		

College of Arts and Humanities

Adelaida Shelley	Juan Diaz	Gennady Kurin	Skye De Saint Felix
Ashley Hufnagel	Leandra Cormier	Jack Werner	Erika Exton
Brienne Adams	Mireia Toda Cosi	Jessica Wicks-Allen	Katharine Glanbock
Christina Sessoms	Nelida Devesa-Gomez	Joanna Labor	Zachary Maher
Dallas Donnell	Ofelia Montelongo Valencia	John Fetherston	Eva Peskin
Hazim Abdullah-Smith	Olga Morozova	Jonathan Brower	Jacqueline Mueck
Jacqueline Partida	Roberto Katrandjiyski	Judith Aaron	Justine Decamillis
Kelsey Michael	Sofia Maurette	Kyle Pruitt	Otis Ramsey-Zoe
Mark Lockwood	Victoria Herrera Arvay	Kyle Stelzer	Aaron Bartlett
Miguel Amaguaña	Alexandria Pecoraro	Lauren Cain	Alexis Walston
Prisma Herrera	Allison Coe	Lauren Michalak	Brandy Williams
Robert Jiles	Alyssa Centanni	Mauricio Restrepo	Brian Davis
Timothy Kumfer	Clinton Soisson	Maytal Mark	Brittany Starr
Wanda Hernandez	Colin Doyle	Mischa Wolfinger	Chauncey Dennie
Yvonne Bramble	Elizabeth Massey	Rachael Kirschenmann	Chika Onyenezi
Zachary Johnson	Joseph Scott	Saban Aglar	Claudia Allen
Elizabeth Katt	Julia Kuhlman	Sabrina Gonzalez	Claudia Rojas
Heidi Zenisek	Mariángel Villalobos Benavides	Sara Ludewig	Daniel Kason
Martin Gonzales	Natalie Groom	Sophie Hess	Elizabeth Nonemaker
Amanda Chen	Patrick Allies	Stanley Maxson	Grace Kwon
Lindsay Dupertuis	Samuel Ambrose	Thomas Messersmith	Jeannette Schollaert
Connie Dai	Allison Hedges	Aaron Doliana	Jehane Sharah
Tara Wells	Enrique Urueta	Alexandra Krauska	Jonathan Reyes
Crystal Charity	Eric Pitney	Jessica Mendes	Kiera Wolfe

Ashley Aragon	Fraser Stevens	Lawrence Malcic	Kyle Bickoff
Elizabeth Phipps	Jacob Hughes	Masa Beslin	Lauren Flanigan
Erika Perez Montes	Jenna Gerdson	Maxime Papillon	Lisa Latouche
Jeannette Viens	Jonelle Walker	Polina Pleshak	Melanie Rio
Kathryn Thier	Jordan Ealey	Mikol Bailey	Rebecca Cawthorne
Lingyan Ma	Kelley Holley	Cody Gomez	Mehdy Sedaghat Payam
Matthew Salzano	Kioumars Mazandarani Haeri	Shen Pan	Alexander Dunphy
Misti Yang	Po-Hsien Chu	Zhaoqi Hu	Brian Sarginger
Naette Lee	Zavier Taylor	Cecilia Battauz	Briceno Bowrey
Nora Heist	Adreanna Nattiel	Charis Gozzo	Caitlin Kennedy
Samantha Stanley	Jocelyn Coates	Daniela Bulansky	Caroline Angle
Sarah Vick	Lenora Knowles	Daniela Hernandez	Charlie Fanning
Shelby Sturm	Sarah Scriven	Dylan Lewis	Darien Brahms
Eben Levey	Evan Ash		

Robert H. Smith School of Business

Julia Barr	Vedangi Deo	Pooja Datre	Neha Mundra
Eden Rivera	Neha Agrawal	Yuchen Song	Neerja Singh
Hsiaoting Ko			

College of Behavioral and Social Sciences

Alana Todd-Rodriguez	Hyung Kim	Autumn Perkey	Devin Butler
Kevin Gibbons	Lauren Salig	Brittany Frechette	Emily Forgo
Lorin Brace	Rachel Thompson	Elizabeth Irlbacher	Greta Jankauskaite
Nic Galloway	Chenyu Mao	Florian Gawehns	Jordan Epistola
Sammy Primiano	Claire Hou	Haley Augustson	Joshua Ryan
Val Hall	Ece Yegane	Jennifer St Sume	Junaid Merchant
Will Wical	Elena Ramirez	Madeline Fleishman	Katie Rim
Amy Dickinson	Elif Osun	Ojashwi Pathak	Kelsey Canada
Esme Pierzchala	Francy Nathalie Gonzalez Prieto	Ryan Frazier	Kristen Regenauer
Alexandra Smith	Jiahao Tang	Simon Sheaff	Matthew Coon
Erin Tinney	Palak Suri	Taylor Vincent	Morgan Botdorf
Jacob Scocca	Tereza Varejkova	Ted Ellsworth	NaYeon Yang
Madeline Romm	Aolin Jia	Alanna Schloss	Rewina Bedemariam
Melissa Manley	Diana Parker	Amritha Mallikarjun	Victoria Garriques
Sean Houlihan	Guimin Zhu	Anna Tinnemore	Brittany Dernberger
Taylor Whittington	Jeffery Sauer	Einat Korman	Chandra Reyna
Toryn Sperry	Kelly Anderson	Kayla Horning	Danielle Koonce
Xinyi Situ	Kelly Gustafson	Alexandra Breslin	Emily Campbell
Yesenia Yanez	Meredith Brown	Stephanie Coffey	Robyn Moore
Asha Pavuluri	Rachel Lamb	Bridget Makol	Saswathi Natta
Diana Alkire	Rebecca Traldi	Chelsea Haakenson	Shilpa Reddy
Elizabeth Kolberg	Amelia Meli	Claire Kaplan	Simone Durham

College of Computer, Mathematical and Natural Sciences

Elizabeth Tarantino	Taylor Gedeon	Caitlin Christian-Lamb	Pei Zhang
Harrison Agrusa	Abhilasha Sancheti	Daniel Votipka	Pranava Jayanti
Joseph DeMartini	Alejandro Flores Velazco	Eddie Schoute	Priyankur Chaudhuri
Joseph Durbak	Alexander Brassel	Erica Blum	Ran Tao
Ramsey Karim	Alexander Hoyle	Georgios Tsimos	Sean Gruber
Teal	Aounon Kumar	Honghao Fu	Stavros Papathanasiou
Ellen Buckley	Aviva Prins	Jacob Bremerman	Stephen Sorokanich
Eviatar Bach	Brandon Stoeckel	Jerad Hanson	Tessa Thorsen
Joseph Knisely	Christine Herlihy	Jessica Brown	Valeriia Cherepanova
Anna Davis	Deepthi Raghunandan	Joseph Barrow	Yong Cui
Domenick Braccia	Gowthami Somepalli	Kamal Gupta	Zuping Wang
Edward Hurme	Gregory Kramida	Kelsey Fulton	Abu Abu Saleh Musa Patoary
Felix Bartsch	Hao Chen	Lillian Huang	Alex Fernez
Grace Capshaw	Jacob Rasiel	Matthew Goldberg	Alireza Parhizkar
Gregory Perrin	Jessica Thompson	Max Ehrlich	Brandon Johnson
Jacqueline Minehart	Jingling Li	Mozhi Zhang	Brianna Montoya
Jonathan Schenk	Joanna Shoemaker	Navaneeth Bodla	Christos Tengeris
Morgan Musgrove	Kealyssa Castillo-Martin	Nika Jurov	Eli Mizrachi
Pablo Villar	Kiante Brantley	Shlok Mishra	Elizabeth Friedman
Ruilong Hu	Mara Levy	Troy Sewell	Ernst Grunow
Jeffrey James Nicole Baffoe-Bonnie Baldassano Barbour	Marina Knittel	Uttaran Bhattacharya	Hadi Vafaei
Custodio de Oliveira Nunes	Michael Curry	Vineet Shenoy	Hong Nhung Nguyen
Damani Eubanks	Monikka Ravichandran	Yushan Feng	Hoony Kang
Juan Barbosa Caro	Naman Awasthi	Ahreum Lee	Jameson O'Reilly
Yantnew Gete	Nirat Saini	Alexander Wikner	John Armstrong
Aiysha Ashfaq	Noel Warford	Amitava Banerjee	John Evans
Alexander Demokritou	Noemi Glaeser	Andrew Goffin	Jonathan Kunjummen
Alexandra Olson	Omer Akgul	Anna Fitzmaurice	Joseph Murray
Benjamin Lanham	Onur Kulaksizoglu	Artur Perevalov	Junheng Tao
Betsegaw Lemma	Phillip Pope	Deric Session	Kristen Voigt
Christina Camara	Ping-Yeh Chiang	Dustin Swanson	Kwok Fan
Daniel Birtles	Pranav Goel	Harjot Singh	Landry Horimbere
Daniel Hunter	Qingyang Tan	Harry Arnold	Mary Pitman
Daniel Trettel	Rashmi Sankepally	Julia Sell	Max Trevor
Danyon Fischbach	Ruoxi Li	Linus Feder	Monica Gutierrez Galan
Darnell Harris	Sadiq Shaik	Lucas Railing	Naren Manjunath
Darrin Liao	Samuel Dooley	Meenwook Ha	Natalia Pankratova
Emily Luteran	Sankha Guria	Ruben Rojas Garcia	Rob Dalka
Hallie Pennington	Shuhong Chen	Uday Saha	Sagar Airen
Kevin Weber	Sneha Gathani	Aquia Richburg	Sagnik Saha
Laura McBride	Snehesh Shrestha	Blake Fritz	Srilekha Gandhari
Madeline Newkirk	Vedant Nanda	Chi-Hao Wu	Srivatsa Tata
Michael Hitt	William Chen	Daochen Wang	Subhayan Sahu

Owen Baron	Yang Cao	Foivos Chnaras	Yingyue Zhu
Qinglin Lin	Yuelin Liu	Gustavo Varela-Alvarenga	Zishuo Yang
Radiandra Soemardi	Maria Cramer	Jenny Talbott Rustad	Deepak Sathyan
Ruixing Wang	Matthew Fischer	Jiaqi Leng	Saurabh Kadam
Thomas Howard	Ted Striegel	Jordan Hirsh	Allison Carter
Thomas Kauffman	Haley Talbot-Wendlandt	Kayla Davie	Debopriyo Biswas
Wade Hodson	James Bader	Keith Mills	Jacob Ward
Aditi Dubey	Liam Peterson	Konstantinos Pantazis	Jonathan Vannucci
Alexander Forde	Phillip Alvarez	Liam Fowl	Laird Egan
David Ferranti	Samira Aghayee	Manyuan Tao	Michael Winer
Isabel Sullivan	Ahmed Taha	Micah Goldblum	Mika Chmielewski
Jawshan Ara	Alexander Rowden	Michael Rozowski	Shangjie Guo
Kevin Bennett	Benjamin Sela	Nelson Moll	Shantam Ravan
Max Ferlauto	Patrick Sheehan	Spandan Pathak	

College of Education

Christopher Samoray	Julie Miller	Kelly Smith	Anisha Singh
Felicia Onuma	Marissa Sariol-Clough	Rachel Ghosh	Benjamin Rickles
Genevieve Hildebrand	Monica Anthony	Douglas McNamara	Christian Meyer
Justin Hillman	Montserrat Cubillos Guzman	Erin Janulis	Jannah Fusenig
Priya Bansal	Sara Palczynski	Genevieve D'Cruz	Jason Saltmarsh
Sean Morley	Tarik Buli		

A. James Clark School of Engineering

Timothy Reedy	Maria Rodriguez	Sheung Lu	Naila Al Hasan
Anand Patel	Sanaz Aliari	Shuangqi Luo	Sang-Jin Chung
Andrew Ceruzzi	Setare Ghahri Saremi	Xiaomin Lin	Yudong Li
Animesh Shastry	Taylor Motley	Yujunrong Ma	Yusra Anwar
Ilya Semenov	Yeming Hao	Yutao Chen	Amber Pierdinock
Nishant Nemani	Chelsea Stolt	Mohamed Ahmed	Cathleen Needham
Rachel Suitor	Jane Sonneman	Xingyu Ren	Dong-Hyun Cho
Sharan Nayak	Rachel Tillinghast	Ann Ramirez	Ellery Klein
Shikha Redhal	Amit Kundu	Justine Yu	Janel Niska
Dylan Kline	Ankit Mondal	Mohamed Ali	Joshua Cocker
Qin Ni	Arafat Hasnain	Romanus Hutchins	Kunal Ahuja
Sean Mack	Candace Walden	Sally Wang	Lautaro Cilenti
Tao Deng	Christopher Zawacki	Jacob Isbell	Nehemiah Emaikwu
Tejaswi Tammareddy	Hunter Kippen	Rahil Parikh	Ramin Moradi
Aliakbar Kabiri	Jair Certorio	Samuel Langlois	Rishabh Chaudhary
Amir Nohekhan	Jiahao Zhan	Adelaide Nolan	Shao-Peng Chen
Cadijah Walcott	Lei Pan	Christopher Klingshirn	Sophia Relph
Gaohong Yin	Rupasinghe Rupasinghe	Md Shafiqul Islam	Tanjebul Alam
Hamed Ghaedi	Sai Kanth	Megan Kimicata	Varun Khemani
Jawairia Ahmad			

College of Information Studies			
Astha Khurana	Shawn Janzen	Nathan Beard	Kelly Hoffman
David Biel	Sravya Amancherla	Neviya Prakash	Lori Perine
Duncan Griffin	Sydney Triola	Priya Kumar	Marilyn Iriarte Santacruz
Emily Belknap	Tammie Nelson	Rachel Mattos	Marybeth Gill
Gagan Jindal	Utkarsh Dwivedi	Rohit Kashyap	Modassir Iqbal
Hayleigh Moore	Wei-Wei Chi	Salma Elsayed-Ali	Naishi Jain
Karen Boyd	Zhuoni Jie	Shandra Morehouse	
Philip Merrill College of Journalism			
Aneurin Canham-Clyne	Julia Lerner	Katy June-Friesen	Robin Sundaramoorthy
Grace Todd	Kate Yanchulis	Luciana Perez-Urbe Guinassi	Sara Browning
Sean McGoey			
School of Public Policy			
Poorti Sapatnekar	Charles Weissfellner	Jeremy Schmidt	Keara Richardson
Calista Struby	Christina Arevalo	John O'Neill	Tyra Reed
School of Public Health			
Charlene Kuo	Katherine Kim	Sarah Hurlbert	Katherine Tomlinson
Juliana Munoz	Lauren Eagan	Shuo Huang	Laura Briggs Drew
Maisha Huq	Monica Nelson	Sidney Chen	Matthew Rodriguez
Michelle Jasczynski	Yang Zhang	Taehyun Kim	Naheed Ahmed
Nathaniel Woodard	Aaliyah Robertson	Anna Posbergh	Natasha Williams
Amanda Ng	Hyeonjin Song	Brandon Wallace	Yuki Lama
Jessica Keralis	Jackie Lai	Daniel Callow	Aitalohi Amaize
Ashley Pantaleao	Jan-Michael Archer	Gabriel Pena	Cassie Sodergren
C. Andrew Conway	Richard Remigio	Gina Garcia	Elle Pope
Dane De Silva	Alan Arellano	James Heilman	Juanita Richards
Izidora Skracic	Alexandra Simione	Jennifer Lee	Liyang Xie
Jingshuai Du	Rya Griffis	Junyeon Won	Samuel Bara-Garcia
Other (mostly administration)			
Allison Buser	Rahat Sharif	Amelia Avis	Sarah Kilmer
Benjamin Shaw	Leigh Dunewood	Gaby Yu	Yasmeen Khan
Emery Patterson	Shakia Asamoah	Sergio Pinto	Jaime Williams
Karina Kletscher	Janai Raphael	Ashley Clark	Semi Yeom
Margaret Hunt	Jung Kim	Chase Oatis	Sujitha Sekar Rajan
Samantha O'Donnell	Valeria Morales	Hannah Sanders	Grace Mandato
Zayden Tethong	Brianna Aldridge	Kiyah McDermid	Kymerly Drapcho
Miya Walker	Xinqian Qiu	Patrice Greene	Heidi Bloom
Aqdas Aftab	Brianna Nunez	Erin Taylor	Arman Liwanag
Rajni Sharma	Ruogu Wang	Taylor Wilds	Jenna Trupp
Genevieve Kocienda	Meredith Glaze	Annie Rappeport	Marque Long
Grace Chung	Bekzod Akramov	Karrin Thompson	Jashan Gupta

Emmanuel Wanjala	Ashrith Shetty	Luanjiao Aggie Hu	Babadamilola Alao
Jeremy Gombin-Sperling	Xanh Tran	Naomi Fritts	Claudia Umana
Cameron Busacca	William Howell	Le-Roy Battle	Erin Sorensen

Alexander M. Hoyle_FAV_SB658

Uploaded by: Hoyle, Alexander

Position: FAV

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,

Graduate workers are fundamental to carrying out the purpose of any research university. They are the researchers and teachers that keep the university functioning. In any other context, workers doing this kind of mission-critical work would be considered employees. As such, they deserve the right to organize, so that they may secure workplace protections --- from sexual harassment, abuse, and retribution for raising concerns --- that ensure safe working environments elsewhere. To continually deny this right to a group that is an engine for innovation, intellectual leadership, and economic growth in this state is a severe moral failing.

Sincerely,

Alexander Hoyle
PhD Student, Computer Science
Teaching Assistant
4800 Somerset Rd
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Ashley Hufnagel_FAV_SB658

Uploaded by: Hufnagel, Ashley

Position: FAV

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,

As a PhD Candidate in the Department of American Studies and Graduate Assistant at University of Maryland, College Park, I am urging you to pass SB 658. We are workers and deserve to be afforded the right to collectively bargain to ensure work with dignity on Maryland's campuses.

UMD promotes itself as a place of "fearless ideas," but the denial of this human right to collectively bargain creates an atmosphere where graduate workers fear speaking up about low-wages, large teaching loads, and unclear and uneven contracts for fear of reprisals. We are officially told that we are not allowed to work outside the university, because our stipends (for the work we do) are granted to us to cover our living expenses so we can focus full-time on our studies. It is never enough. I have always had to work another job to pay my bills and even then I have often had to use credit cards to make up the difference. I am decidedly poorer and more in debt since I came to graduate school. Instead of nurturing the development of emerging scholars and educators, poor working conditions make it challenging for graduate students to focus on their studies. There are wide discrepancies in graduate students' work loads across departments and little transparency around these decisions. In my department, graduate students have often been required to be the primary instructors for undergraduate classes. When graduate students complain about the work-load, we are often told to spend as little time as possible on teaching. This seems incredibly unfair to undergraduate students who are paying and taking out loans to come to Maryland's flagship school to receive what they hope is an excellent education.

SB 658 is not simply about the working conditions of graduate students, but about the educational integrity of UMD. I hope you will seriously consider this matter.

Sincerely,

Ashley Hufnagel
PhD Candidate, Department of American Studies
Graduate Teaching Assistant
3008 Ellerslie Ave.,
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Margaret Rose Hunt

Uploaded by: Hunt, Margaret Rose

Position: FAV

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 a second-year, second-semester master's student in Library and Information Science, with a focus on Access Services and Data Librarianship. I am also a graduate assistant in the UMD Libraries' working in User Services. I do the work of a staff member and I am lucky that my department director and supervisor feel the same; I feel valued. I support collective bargaining for this reason: I want all of the other graduate assistants to feel secure in their work position. We all have enough stress between completing coursework and work assignments, worrying about having all of that taken away with little cause should not weigh us down. There is the additional issue of equity across assistantships to ensure that graduate assistants are not overworked and are given clear expectations from the beginning. Collective bargaining is about coming together to fight for all of us at the same time.

I felt called to submit testimony because I have seen two sides of the graduate student experience: caring only for myself and being the sole support for two people. I got married this past year and my partner has not been legally allowed to work since July 2019. I have been the only person in my household with a paycheck. Because of our situation, I also have to pay for health insurance for both of us, reducing my income even further. That stress combined with immigration, coursework, and completing my unpaid field internship has made these few months difficult. I would not have been able to complete my degree without my assistantship and its meager salary keeping us barely above the poverty line. My reality exists in stark contrast against the perception of graduate students as young people, dependent on parents, living by their wits and loving it. This has not been my experience, nor the experience of anyone I have met in my program. The out of state tuition for the University of Maryland is exorbitant and the requirements for qualifying for in-state tuition are unattainable for a post-graduate population that can't be geographically bound due to an already over-saturated academic market. There is no good solution right now, just the bandage of tuition remission covering the gaping wound of the cost of living, \$1,000+ semester fees, and now required health insurance. The argument that graduate assistants should get additional work ignores several things, namely time, resources, and legality (specifically for student visa holders), and does not question why graduate assistants should have to have secondary (or tertiary) positions to make ends meet. Collective bargaining will not solve this problem immediately but is a means for graduate assistants to work together in a meaningful way without fear of retaliation from the administration.

Sincerely,
Margaret Rose Hunt

Master's Library and Information Science, College of Information Studies
Administrative Assistant, User Services and Resource Sharing, UMD Libraries
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Zachary Johnson

Uploaded by: Johnson, Zachary

Position: FAV

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 collective bargaining rights for graduate employees. I have worked in higher education all of my life, and this is my fourth year working as a graduate employee for an academic program. I know, from experience, how vital it is for graduate workers to be able to collectively represent their interests to the university. By passing this legislation, you will give us the opportunity to work together to ensure we have access to the resources we need without incurring more debt.

Sincerely,

Zachary Johnson
Ph.D. Student, American Studies Department
Graduate Assistant
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Lenora R. Knowles

Uploaded by: Knowles, Lenora

Position: FAV

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 write this letter in full support of SB 658 and strongly encourage all members of the Appropriations committee to vote in support of a bill that would have lasting positive impact for the learning and working environment of Graduate Assistants in the University of Maryland System and thus the broader UM community.

I currently serve as the President of the Department of Women's Studies Graduate Student Association. I enrolled as a doctoral student in the Department of Women's Studies at the University of Maryland in 2016 excited to be a part of a thriving intellectual community. However, since arriving at the University of Maryland, College Park I have personally experienced and witnessed among my beloved colleagues, the everyday challenges of being denied official recognition as UM employees and the right to collectively bargain.

We are left susceptible to workplace exploitation and harassment from our superiors, unclear job expectations, hostile and punitive working conditions, unlivable wages, no sick days/disability leave, and even requirements to pay "student fees" upwards to \$500 (each semester) on our insufficient budgets because we are not recognized as employees and thus denied the right to collectively bargain for our basic employment rights. Currently, we have no official recourse or method by which to be officially acknowledged, make our voices heard or know that our rights will be respected and upheld as vital workers to the UM system community.

I want to be able to work with dignity. Poverty wages do not facilitate dignity. Intimidation, hostility, overwork, and abuse of power in the workplace do not proffer dignity. Unfortunately, these have been my reality as a first generation college graduate and now a doctoral student. I want to be able to offer my students my best however, poverty wages and poor working conditions compromise my quality of life and thus hinder my ability to give my best to my students.

Therefore, I urge the Maryland Legislature and Governor to legalize collective bargaining rights for Maryland graduate employees by passing SB 658.

Sincerely,
Lenora R. Knowles
PhD Student, Women's Studies
Teaching Assistant
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Gregory Kramida

Uploaded by: Kramida, Gregory

Position: FAV

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,

We ask you to support and pass SB 658, to legalize collective bargaining rights for all Maryland's higher education public employees.

I am certain you will receive plenty of testimonies from other students sharing with you the many pragmatic reasons for this that the effects of SB 658, if adopted, are to stimulate and promote Maryland's higher education, science, and technology, furthering the long-term interests of all parties involved. I am certain you will also see plenty of social proof: how collective bargaining has been adopted by other University systems in this country to great success and benefit of all. Hence, in my testimony, I will focus on ethical, moral reasons.

This country was founded on the principle of equality before the law, and on the principle that hard work eventually leads to earnings, success, and upward mobility. Over centuries, these principles were reinforced and spread about to encompass any and every minority, for this system was designed to serve the interests of all people, not just some elite class. The right to unionize and bargain terms of employment became a universally applied and recognized right...

Except in the realm of higher education, and, in particular, not for graduate employees. This is the single domain which was widely regarded as the place of privileged, white, predominantly male elite in the past, those with the financial means, proper connections, and time to spend on education and enlightenment, to earn a status symbol of high society. However, over the last several decades this domain has utterly transformed, while the outdated public perception of it, in many circles, has endured.

The graduate students of today usually come from a much poorer background. These are often single people, who traveled from a poorer country because this situation represents an opportunity and somewhat-better conditions for them. Sometimes, these are people with families, struggling to support their spouses and kids. In yet other cases, these are people who have decided to sacrifice higher wages for a number of years in the name of science and research, brave enough to face the remaining frontiers of human knowledge. The more affluent, on the other hand, often steer clear of graduate school, for it is no longer a symbol of economic prestige, and, for many, does not truly yield additional material gains.

Yet, here we have, some of the brightest minds in our country, all having Bachelors' and some -- Master's degrees, toiling away at some of the most qualified intellectual labor anywhere in the

world, for wages comparable to those of the cleaning personnel at the same institution. And they, unlike the cleaning personnel, are not allowed to unionize. How do we, as a society justify this?

For one, we say that this work they do all just part of their training, hence they don't deserve to be treated as other workers. They're "just students". Let us dwell on this point for a bit. Can you think of a single intellectual job that doesn't require some amount of on-the-job training? Does this preclude the employees' right to collectively bargain with their employer? The answers are obvious, and we are faced with a vicious double standard.

Secondly, we say that these employees are just "assistants", they just do the grunt-work. The reality is they come and "assist", from 20 to 60 hours a week, doing the bulk of both on the teaching and research fronts. Discussion sessions, laboratory sessions, office hours, grading, proctoring, and subbing for lectures are all tasks performed -- often times, solely -- by the teaching "assistants". The bulk -- virtually, all -- of data gathering, experiment design, coding and tool-building, and analysis is performed by research "assistants." Not to leave out other graduate assistants, those often do the same work they would often do in the private sector, but for a tiny fraction of the pay. And all this is leaving aside the fact that, even if they *were* some kind of low-level assistants doing grunt work, how could that diminish their role from any other employee, public or private? Again, we see a double standard, and one based on false pretenses.

Finally, there is the question of "who is going to pay for it?". Hypothetically, let us consider any other minority out there. African Americans. Native Americans. Women. Hypothetically, let us imagine they were for whatever, as a group, deprived of the collective bargaining rights of other workers. Imagine now, that someone would use, as an argument against granting those rights to such a group, the phrase "who is going to pay for it?" The simple truth is that it would go against the very principles I spoke of earlier, principles of equal opportunity for all, to speak those words. Hence, we see yet another double-standard which cannot be overlooked or justified.

To repress someone's right to collectively bargain on grounds of prospective costs is to, in effect, recognize the importance of their role, recognize that they actually *would* be able to bargain for higher wages *because* their role is pivotal, and yet to deny them this simple right, effectively oppressing them through loopholes in the legal system, in order to save a dime for the tax-payers, as well as further secure the cozy positions of University bureaucrats and lofty salaries of tenured professors.

When you consider SB 658, keeping the points I covered above in mind, please ask yourselves how else failure to pass SB 658 can be morally justifiable, and, if it is not passed, what it speaks of us as a state and a people.

Sincerely,

Gregory Kramida
Ph.D. Candidate, Department of Computer Science,
Graduate Research Assistant,

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College Park, MD 20742
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Antonios Kyprianidis

Uploaded by: Kyprianidis, Antonio

Position: FAV

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 a PhD candidate in University of Maryland, doing research in Quantum Optics, and also an international student from Greece.

First of all, the proposed bill will allow graduate students to collectively bargain if they choose to do so, possibly starting by forming a union. This is not an end-goals in itself; it is the suggestions it will put forward that justify its existence. And talking about suggestions and needs...

I've heard previously that I should primarily think of myself as a student working towards their dissertation, instead of as a worker meriting compensation for all hours of work. Our labs receive millions of funding to develop solutions and prototypes by doing very real work. Commonly, our professors rely on graduate students and post-docs to operate these labs. Yet, our love for science and the fact that we DO acquire a lot of knowledge during our PhDs have been distorted into a "students-and-not-workers" label by the Dean of the Graduate School in a previous hearing for the bill. This label allows the university to pay stipends averaging \$20k/year.

In any case, I get paid "like a student", but I cannot pay rent or eat "like a student". We also heard that a certain survey showed that the living cost in Maryland does not exceed roughly \$20k/year. I AGREE with this statement. In fact, it's hard to miss how literal it is. One will live with \$20k/year; they will not die – excluding emergencies. If the assumption here is that graduate students do not deserve to satisfy every single one of a list of needs like a healthy diet AND decent housing AND leisure activities AND financial protection from medical emergencies – and all of this in one of the most expensive areas in the United States – then I am unpleasantly surprised by this assumption.

Moving on, to working conditions and advisor-advisee relationships, UMD does have grievance mechanisms in place. Grievance mechanisms that can really only address isolated incidents of guideline violation. When it comes to issues like work hours, vacation days, or even participation to science outreach events, then University guidelines are overlooked widely and wildly.

Especially international students feel pressured to follow all of their advisor professor's requirements, since their legal status in the country is tied to their degree. An advisor professor holds an enormous amount of power over the student and their relationship determines the student's later career. A certain professor was as respectful as to say, "I tend to ignore emails about these statements of mutual expectations" (which is a recently earned right for graduate students. Who will risk pushing back? By the way, I believe that this answers another one of Dean Fetter's concerns, that a union could be an intermediary complicating the mentor-mentee

relationship: it is an advisor not tending to the needs and realities of their advisees that complicates this relationship.

Let me conclude by saying: UMD graduate assistants are facing issues that are known and unaddressed. This means that the only ones who can advocate for them are themselves, and the right to collective bargaining serves exactly that necessity. We are not asking for the right to advocate for unfairly high salaries, laziness or disruption – we are just stating that not having collective bargaining rights undermines the work we are doing, challenges any reasonable line of thought and compromises our dignity. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Antonios Kyprianidis
PhD Candidate, Department of Physics
Research assistant
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UMCP

Uploaded by: Lamb, Rachel

Position: FAV

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,

As the President and Vice President of Government Affairs for the Graduate Student Government at the University of Maryland, College Park (UMCP), we strongly urge you to support HB 214/SB 658. For the fourth year in a row, our graduate governance body at UMCP has once again passed a resolution in support of this legislation. With elected representatives from across campus, we represent the voice of 10,000 graduate students, including the 4,400 graduate assistants serving in teaching, research and administrative roles.

Our support for this bill is based on the volume of concerns that have been brought to our attention by graduate students who have felt vulnerable and threatened in the current graduate assistantship environment. Despite proactive engagement with the existing Meet and Confer process, we believe it fundamentally lacks efficacy and protection for graduate students.

Some of the most concerning and frequent problems we hear among GSG constituents relate to graduate assistantships. For example, we have documented complaints about supervisors requiring their graduate assistants to work over the allotted hours on a regular basis and in ways that are not related to their prescribed roles. Further, despite attempts to implement informal statements of mutual expectations, set between a supervisor and graduate assistant, these are neither required nor provide legal protection, as would a contract, if there is a breach of expectation. These problems are detrimental to the entire university community which depends on the significant contributions made by graduate students to keep operations running smoothly from teaching undergraduate courses to aiding in research and supporting student affairs units.

We hope our testimony regarding the deficiencies of the Meet and Confer process at the University of Maryland provides context as to why this bill is so important for protecting the graduate assistants who depend on this work to make their graduate education financially viable.

Again, we are here in our leadership capacity to represent the many graduate students who have come to us asking for support and advocacy. We hope to lift up the voices and experiences of these constituents by asking you to support HB 214/SB 658. This legislation would provide us with a powerful and alternative avenue for addressing the serious employment issues affecting graduate assistants. It should be our *right* to collective bargain if we choose to do so.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Sincerely,

Annie Rappeport
PhD Candidate, College of Education
President, Graduate Student Government

Rachel Lamb
PhD Candidate, Department of Geographical Sciences
Vice President of Government Affairs

0121A Stamp Student Union
College Park, MD 20742
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Sara Ludewig

Uploaded by: Ludewig, Sara

Position: FAV

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,

My name is Sara Ludewig and I am a dual degree Master's student at the University of Maryland, College Park. I also work as an administrative graduate assistant for the university. In my position as an Academic Advisor for Undergraduate Students in the History Department, I provide academic and career advice, administrative support, and general guidance to over 300 students majoring in History and over 100 students minoring in history. My co-advisor and I conduct valuable work to support the academic work of the department. Without our recruitment efforts, career advice, academic advising, course enrollment management, and registration help the department and university would not be able to function. Yet, I am not paid a living wage. As a result of the inadequate pay provided by the university, I work a second job on campus. In addition to my 20 hours a week as a graduate assistant, I also work 10 hours as a student assistant at the University Libraries, and, as a full-time graduate student, I take 9 credit hours of coursework. The work I conduct in both of my positions is both personally fulfilling and of crucial importance to the daily functions of the university. However, the university considers me, and the work I am passionate about, expendable and not worthy of basic rights and protections, including the right to advocate for myself alongside other graduate student assistants.

I urge you to support SB 658, a bill that will provide us with the right to collectively bargain. If graduate students are to be valued members of the university community, at the very least, we should be provided with a voice in our working conditions and in the future of work on campus.

Sincerely,

Sara Ludewig
MA/MLIS Student, History and Library and Information Science
Administrative Graduate Assistant
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Shuangqi Luo

Uploaded by: Luo, Shuangqi

Position: FAV

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,

71.428571428% is the percentage of my stipend that I have to spend on housing if I want to live close to UMD and in a room not shared with a roommate, which does not seem like a demanding need.

If the rationale behind fully funded PhD programs is providing people -- who are at least intellectually qualified -- an amount of money that's just enough to free them from worrying basic living needs, meanwhile, respecting their basic intellectual dignity, it appears that UMD is failing in this perspective. In my experience, it's almost impossible to rely on my stipend to get through if I have regular meals like any functional human being will.

And many graduate students are actually not seeking wealth -- at least not at this stage -- but striving to contribute to researches that are challenging and, in many cases, significantly important to our society. But as far as I know most of graduate assistants are being overworked and underpaid, which is probably the worst combination that could happen to any worker.

I believe we do deserve better working environment where reasonable opinions can get reasonable amount of attention and discussion. Therefore, I urge you to support the SB 658 bill before you today as well as the citizens and workers who are here before you asking to be recognized.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,

Shuangqi Luo
PhD student, Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering
Teaching Assistant
5607 Silk Tree Dr, Riverdale, 20737, MD
sk.law.lsq@gmail.com

Bayley Marquez_FAV_SB658

Uploaded by: Marquez, Bayley

Position: FAV

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 collective bargaining rights for graduate employees, and I strongly urge you to pass SB 658. As a faculty member at the University of Maryland, College Park I watch graduate student workers teach courses that are integral to the functioning of our department. Graduate student workers often teach courses on their own and are responsible for all aspects of being the instructor of record in addition to their coursework and research. Compared to the faculty who teach these courses they are not being adequately compensated for the work that they do. For example, a lecturer at the University of Maryland makes a minimum salary of \$19, 777 while a GA makes \$16,619. GAs are denied the right to bargain for salary increases even though many of them do the same work as lecturers on campus, who are considered university employees. Without the GAs in our department we would not be able to offer the number of classes we do and students would be seriously impacted.

Additionally, student workers need collective bargaining rights in order to be protected from exploitation in the workplace and to bargain for needed benefits. Many graduate student workers are unfairly asked to work more hours than their stated contract, which impacts their academic progress, yet they do not have the recourse of union protection. Their work benefits the university at the expense of their own studies. Graduate student workers help make the university run and deserve representation when their labor is fundamental to our ability to offer courses to undergraduates. GAs should not have to live in precarious positions, without access to needed benefits, and without the rights to bargain for these benefits when they are workers who provide the education that students pay for at the University of Maryland.

Sincerely,

Bayley J. Marquez
Ph.D., Department of American Studies
Assistant Professor
7508 Garrison Road, Hyattsville, MD 20784
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Stanley Maxson

Uploaded by: Maxson, Stanley

Position: FAV

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,

My name is Stanley Maxson and I am a Ph.D. candidate in U.S. History at the University of Maryland, College Park. I am writing today because I believe that the contingencies of graduate work make collective bargaining a necessity. I am in my fifth year at the University of Maryland. Throughout my time as a graduate student, I have seen issues persist unchanged from the generation of graduate students before me and I am sad to watch them continue for new graduate students. Among these issues are inadequate pay, unequal pay for equal work, food insecurity, housing insecurity, and inadequate mental health services. These issues put a strain on individual graduate students, the departments they call home, and the university as a whole. Without the power of collective bargaining, graduate students have been unable to adequately represent ourselves to departments, the university, and legislators and advocate for the health of our university system.

Sincerely,

Stanley Maxson
Ph.D. candidate, Department of History
Graduate Assistant
3118 Francis Scott Key Hall
smaxson@umd.edu

Michelle Mazurek

Uploaded by: Mazurek, Michelle

Position: FAV

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,

As a faculty member in the Computer Science department at the University of Maryland, College Park, I know that graduate students are the **most important resource** of the university. Without my graduate teaching assistants, I could not manage the large courses that enable the CS department to serve our increasing population of majors. Without my graduate research assistants, I could not conduct the research that advances new knowledge, brings in grant funding, and maintains the university's international reputation.

As valued employees, they deserve basic rights and guarantees, including the right to collectively bargain. As such, I want to voice my strongest support for SB658. Graduate assistants should be paid a living wage, but **currently they are paid considerably less than is needed in our high-cost-of-living area**. Graduate assistants should be allowed to maintain reasonable working hours and should be compensated fairly for the hours they work. They deserve the right to fight and collectively bargain for better wages and working conditions.

Only when graduate students know that their rights are protected, and that they will be paid and treated fairly, will they truly be able to achieve their best work in their critical teaching and research roles on our campus. As such, allowing them to collectively bargain and to fight for their rights is not only the ethically correct choice, but also the practically correct choice, to maintain and increase the long-term strength of the university. I strongly urge you to recognize the basic rights of these valuable employees and support SB658.

Sincerely,

Michelle Mazurek, PhD
Assistant Professor
Computer Science Department, University of Maryland
5236 Iribe Center, College Park, MD 20742
mmazurek@gmail.com

Bowie State

Uploaded by: McGee, Michael

Position: FAV

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

SB 658
Supporting



GRADUATE STUDENT ASSOCIATION

Student Center, Room 3006
14000 Jericho Park Rd, Bowie, MD 20715
P 301-860-3310
bowiestate.edu

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

Thank you very much for affording us the opportunity to write today. As the President of the Graduate Student Association at Bowie State University, I work very closely with the Graduate Program Coordinators and the Graduate Assistants. I am aware of the work they do and their concerns. On behalf of my constituency, I must stand united with students from other University System of Maryland institutions who are in front of you today to urge you to send this bill to the full House of Delegates for consideration.

In August 2016, the National Labor Relations Board ruled that, “student assistants who perform work at the direction of their university for which they are compensated are statutory employees.” It extended collective bargaining rights to all private institutions, and now private institutions in our own region—MCAD, Georgetown, George Washington, and American—are organizing and, in some cases, filing paperwork. These institutions having collective bargaining rights threatens all of our institutions, but is even greater for a small Historically Black College or University such as Bowie State University. To remain competitive and attract the high quality of graduate students that distinguish our institutions in broader arenas, this bill is very crucial to us and we need it now.

Graduate assistants receive mandates and expectations that align with employee expectations and yet very few of the safeguards that employees rely on and need are extended, specifically with respect to compensation. The expectation of our institution is that graduate assistants have no additional employment that would interfere with their availability to the University staff and faculty as GAs. Yet, with compensation below the poverty rate at approximately \$7,700 per year, it is impossible to successfully live and function without assuming debt. Surely allowing GAs to negotiate with the university will allow for more fruitful dialogue and movement toward a more successful Graduate Assistant and University collaboration.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I sincerely hope that you will allow this bill to be considered by the full House of Delegates.

Sincerely,
Donovan Griffin-Blake
Ed.D. Candidate, Educational Leadership
2019- 2020 President, Graduate Student Association

Bowie State University
14000 Jericho Park Drive, Suite 300
Bowie, MD 20715

Junaid Merchant

Uploaded by: Merchant, Junaid

Position: FAV

Delores G. Kelley, Chair, 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 a second-year graduate student in the Neuroscience and Cognitive Science (NACS) program at University of Maryland, and a father of two elementary school aged children. I am writing to ask the MD legislature to pass the SB 658/HB 214 collective bargaining bill.

While I have never been a high income earner, starting a Phd program and being expected to survive on such a meager stipend is exploitative. Since we are expected to produce professional quality work, we should be compensated accordingly. Further, we have been told that if we obtain grant money from an external source, much of which goes straight to the university, that our health and dental benefits are forfeited. Thus, something that would be a net positive not only for me as a researcher, but also for the university, becomes disincentivized. These issues, among many others, are why we need collective bargaining power--to come up with equitable solutions to benefit student workers and the university alike.

Beyond the specific case of University of Maryland, this is a larger societal issue. Under our current administration, fact-based reasoning and institutes of higher education have come under attack. Combined with the fact that various industries are picking off our brightest students, American academic institutions are currently experiencing a 'brain-drain'. This may not be felt immediately, but we are beginning to see how other nations are catching up to our leading position in science and technology. I am not advocating for competitive nationalism, but simply to retain the strengths that we, as a nation, have held for so long. Here again, one of the major systemic solutions that can be offered at the legislative level is empowering our graduate student workers.

I truly hope that you take a proactive approach in recognizing graduate student workers as workers, and pass the SB 658/HB 214 collective bargaining bill.

Sincerely,

Junaid S Merchant, MS
PhD Student in Neuroscience and Cognitive Science (NACS)
Research Assistant, Psychology Department
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Eli Mizrachi

Uploaded by: Mizrachi, Eli

Position: FAV

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,

As you know, our institutions pride themselves on how they cherish democratic values: At the University of Maryland, they are emblazoned on the sides of buses and banners all across campus. However, withholding the ability for graduate workers to choose whether to be able to collectively bargain makes the case that these ideals are as valuable as the plastic they're printed on.

We are told we are lucky to have a "job we love." This is in the same vein as an artist receiving offers of "exposure" to compensate for their labor, despite the fact that exposure is also a cause of death. Like exposure, love does not pay the rent. It does not pay for expenses related to anxiety, stress, and depression--all of which are disproportionately found in graduate students¹. Simply put, an abstract satisfaction with the fruits of our labor is not an acceptable substitute for the protections that collective bargaining rights can offer us.

Lastly, this isn't a matter of us asking for charity. The value that I and my fellow graduate students create deserves fair compensation. The extensive hours that we provide in labor are critical for the functioning of the millions of dollars' worth of ongoing research projects, undergraduate classes, and labs. This is in sharp contrast with our salaries and long working hours which only guarantee that we will narrowly avoid worst-case scenarios, leaving nothing for those of us who are less fortunate or especially vulnerable.

Sincerely,

Eli Mizrachi
PhD Candidate, Department of Physics
Research Assistant
2125 Physical Sciences Complex
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¹ <https://ter.ps/mhreport2018>: UMD 2018 Physics Mental Health Survey

Devon Mohondro_FAV_SB658

Uploaded by: Mohondro, Devon

Position: FAV

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,

As a graduate assistant and student at UMCP, I spend well over 40 hours per week on campus. My responsibilities at work have grown exponentially and the expectation that I take on new tasks has similarly risen. It is expected of me to remain as a “yes man” within the college to pick up any slack left by the full time faculty and staff. Without the hard work of the graduate students across campus, the university would not be able to function properly to maintain its high academic standards.

Throughout my tenure on campus, I have continually experienced severe anxiety like so many others; my anxiety stems from my increased work responsibilities, classwork, as well as my economic well-being. The thought of paying rent at the beginning of the month or rationing my already limited shopping cart at the grocery store sends me into a spiral because our stipends do not allow us the ability to save anything we receive. It’s ironic that we do not receive a livable wage yet we are expected to keep the doors open at the university. We are educators, researchers, administrators, and advisors yet it is increasingly clear that we are underappreciated for all of our hard work.

With all of our responsibilities and anxieties, it would make sense that some well deserved time off would be needed. However, given my 12 month contract, I am expected to be in the office every single week of the year (including all breaks). I do not receive any time off (paid or unpaid). If I would like to take some time off, I can either be told “no” or I can be told that I have to make those hours up before I leave (I have experienced both scenarios). Last semester, it took me three weeks of 60+ hours on campus to make up that time so I could travel back home to attend my brother’s wedding. That is simply outrageous and unfair. I should not be expected to place my work duties before my own brother’s wedding or to fear my supervisor telling me that I cannot leave because I have not made up my hours.

This is clearly a system designed to keep the powerful in power and to suppress the powerless. Quite frankly, I expect more from a world class institution like the University of Maryland and I urge you all to support SB 658 to grant us collective bargaining rights.

Sincerely,

Devon Mohondro
Master of Public Policy ‘20, School of Public Policy

Graduate Assistant, College of Agriculture and Natural Resources
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Kari Nye

Uploaded by: Nye, Kari

Position: FAV

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 have enjoyed academic, financial, and professional privileges in my roles as both a graduate assistant and a teaching assistant within the Maryland School of Architecture, Planning, and Preservation (MAPP). Yet, I have also experienced the following challenges:

- 1) Being paid at an incorrect and lower level than was stipulated by my “contract.” I was disbelieved by one MAPP administrator before being shamed by a faculty member for pressing the business office to correct their mistake;
- 2) Having my healthcare mistakenly terminated in June of 2019—due to the error of a MAPP administrator—during a month where I had undergone a major medical procedure. I was later asked to “remain calm” when no one could answer whether I needed to pay the thousands-dollar bill I received, whether my procedure could be retroactively covered, or even **if** my health care coverage could ultimately be restored;
- 3) Being initially denied payment for work completed during a supplemental hourly appointment, the contract for which had been signed by a MAPP administrator who later decided that “double-dipping” appointments is, apparently, “against policy.”

The result of these experiences has been financial insecurity, limitless anxiety, and antagonism and mistrust between myself and several of my program administrators. The right to collectively bargain does more than offer student-employees the promise of a potentially more stable future: it provides us legitimacy under the law to assert our interests and prevent our exploitation, whether that exploitation is intentional or not. At their best, institutions such as the University of Maryland can provide a safe space for ideas and experimentation—two things the state of Maryland needs in order to remain at the leading edge of innovation across multiple fields. But a bureaucracy that cannot be trusted to take care of its most valuable asset—students—does not deserve the power afforded by the status quo.

In closing, I support SB 658 and urge you to do the same. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Kari Nye
Master of Community Planning Student ‘20, MAPP
Graduate Assistant, former Teaching Assistant
618 Venable Avenue
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Jameson O'Reilly

Uploaded by: O'Reilly, Jameson

Position: FAV

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 SB 658 and grant graduate workers at the University of Maryland the right to collectively bargain. We are employees of the University whose labor is an integral part of its education and research ecosystem. Graduate employees are the ones doing the grading and research that allows the University to educate Maryland's next generation of leaders and to develop the next wave of innovations that will stimulate its economy. Without this labor, classes and research would grind to a halt.

Our reward is incredibly long hours, supervisors with almost total impunity in how they treat us, and an administration that misleads you about our cost of living. Currently, most graduate students are directly supervised by a tenured professor who often demands well more than 20 hours per week, up to 60 hours in many cases. The systems currently in place to handle student grievances and hold these supervisors accountable are woefully inadequate. Complaints go to a designated member of the faculty, who has every incentive to take the side of their fellow professor and who has no oversight from the student side because without collective bargaining we have no power to organize. As an example, the Graduate School claims that they recently implemented parental leave policies, but they have no mechanism to force individual supervisors to allow their students to actually take this time off.

Rather, we are left as individuals to fight against tenured professors who make 10 times our salary and who hold our careers in their hands. Collective bargaining would give weight to graduate employees' complaints and force the University to recognize our requests, unlike the current "Meet and Confer" process. The University has no obligation to contend with our demands under this framework, which has led us to the current situation.

The minimum stipend is set based on the expected "cost of attendance," which is not even reasonable based on University-subsidized services. While I already find it insulting for my pay to be based on what my employer deems the bare minimum to survive, rather than being based on the value that I provide to the University, it is further demeaning that the University-subsidized housing costs up to \$1227 a month for a one bedroom apartment, almost twice the amount the Graduate School quotes for "rent and utilities." In addition, the "health insurance" expenses that they quote are less than the cost of the University-provided health insurance premiums, and presumably do not include the costs of receiving any actual medical care.

While my stipend in the Physics department is enough to cover my normal yearly expenses, this would not be the case were I to have any sort of accident or emergency. And for many students in other departments, their stipends do not even cover their basic expenses, meaning that graduate school, even at this public institution, is only available for people with families who can support them well into their 20s. As a result, I would not be able to get a PhD in sociology or biology here and would likely need to exit my current program were anything to happen to me or a member of my family.

I am fortunate to be interested in a field with a stipend that can cover my expenses, but I want to stand up for and fight with the graduate workers everywhere at the University of Maryland, including workers in other departments, workers with families, workers here from abroad, and workers with hostile or abusive supervisors. The only way to ensure the greatest health and well-being for graduate employees, and therefore the best education and research for the state of Maryland, is to allow us to bargain collectively.

We deserve the right to collectively bargain because we are essential employees of the University. We need it because only together do graduate employees have the power to secure what we need to remain fully happy and productive.

Sincerely,

Jameson O'Reilly
PhD Student, Physics
Research Assistant
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K. Sarah Ostrach

Uploaded by: Ostrach, K.Sarah

Position: FAV

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,

My name is Kraina Sarah E. Ostrach. I am in my final semester of the Master of Library Science (MLIS) program with the College of Information Studies at the University of Maryland, College Park. From August 2018 to August 2019, I served as a Graduate Administrative Assistant for the deans of my college.

I consider myself lucky because I did not experience many difficulties in my position, though I was distinctly aware of not having any infrastructure upon which to rely should problems arise. Although my official supervisor was the dean, we only met twice during that year. Instead, I worked with his executive assistant to discuss the details of my position, duties, schedules, etc. All of this information was informally discussed in person or over email; there was no codified contract or document outlining my duties, expectations, schedule, etc. While I am grateful that my time was respected, I must emphasize that I experienced anxiety feeling as though I had no protections should the requirements of my position change. And although I had an amicable relationship with the deans with whom I worked, I was distinctly aware of the hierarchy between us and never wanted to do anything that could jeopardize how my work or I was perceived. Indeed, I once hurt myself on my way to work and ignored the injury, trying to arrive on time. My superiors were understanding and patient as I made a stop at the health center - but I am frustrated that I even thought I should try to go to work first. But that is what happens when there is no clear protocol for such situations.

I would like to reiterate that my experience was generally a positive one, but only due to the individuals with whom I worked. Should my superiors have demanded more of my time or changed their minds more frequently - which has happened to my classmates, and even to myself in an hourly campus position with absolutely no formal delineation of duties - I would have had no recourse to protect myself. The anxiety caused by this situation was exacerbated by the positions of my superiors as the most senior administrators in my college. In addition to taking pride in my work and wishing to do a good job, I was also concerned that any conflict or other situation could have serious repercussions.

I urge the legislature to give graduate students the right to collective action - give them a choice. The anxiety I experienced while working as a Graduate Assistant is unnecessary and negatively affects students' ability to pursue their studies and work. The difficulties that my classmates have experienced with ever-increasing duties, erratic pay schedules, and changing deadlines are unprofessional, unfair, and extremely detrimental to academic pursuits and even mental health.

Graduate school is stressful enough. Employment where the goal posts are ever-shifting, or could shift without notice, is an unnecessary source of stress and hardship and is relatively easy to fix: give students the right and power to demand contracts, a clear list of job duties, and clear protocols for the common situations that arise while working.

Sincerely,

K. Sarah Ostrach
MLIS, College of Information Studies
Former Graduate Administrative Assistant
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Jan Padios

Uploaded by: Padios, Jan

Position: FAV

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

SB658
Supporting

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

I offer the following testimony in favor of bringing Senate Bill 658 to a vote by this governing body. I am an associate professor and the director of graduate studies in the Department of American Studies at the University of Maryland, College Park. I have worked in these roles since 2012 and 2017, respectively. Prior to that, I was a doctoral student in American Studies at New York University for seven years. I am also a scholar with award-winning expertise in the subjects of work and labor.

Together, these experiences have made abundantly clear to me that graduate student employees at public and private institutions alike are not only justified in their fight for collective bargaining rights and unionization, they also deserve it.

Members of the Senate Finance Committee, if you agree that the state of Maryland has an obligation to provide a quality education to taxpayers, then by necessity you agree with the need for workers to provide that education. Without graduate student teachers and teaching assistants, my department would simply not have enough instructors to teach the classes we provide to our academic majors and UMD students as a whole, as part of their general education requirements.

Many detractors will argue that it makes no sense for graduate students to have “industrial” relations with a university, given that students are receiving scholarly, research, and classroom training as a result of their enrollment. Many will also argue that this education and opportunity is a significant part of graduate students’ “compensation,” along with tuition remission, healthcare, and a stipend for living.

However, such arguments overlook the absolutely indispensable work graduate students do as teachers, teaching assistants, and research assistants. They also fail to see how two statements can be true at the same time: graduate students are professionals in training *and* employees of the university. Their research and teaching fulfill personal and professional goals *and* the goals of the institution. The tangible aspects of their employment cannot be ignored, including the amounts they are paid per academic year (roughly \$19,000 in my department), the number of hours they work, and the challenges they face in shaping the conditions and expectations of their labor on campus.

It is my firm belief that graduate students should have the ability to collectively bargain over the conditions and compensations of their labor and that a union of graduate students should be recognized by the institution and the state. In an effort to make this a reality, I ask that you bring SB658 to a vote.

Sincerely,

Jan M. Padios
PhD, Department of American Studies
Associate Professor and Director of Graduate Studies
1328D Tawes Hall
7751 Alumni Drive
University of Maryland, College Park
College Park, Maryland 20742

Emma Podietz

Uploaded by: Podietz, Emma

Position: FAV

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 this legislation which grants collective bargaining rights to graduate employees at institutions of higher education in Maryland. I strongly contend that our labor should be valued as it would be in any other context. Our current situation leaves us without any concrete leverage with which to advocate for ourselves.

I am entering my fourth semester as a Teaching Assistant at UMCP. So far, my experience has been mostly positive, though I am aware of many troubling issues put forth by colleagues in my department and in other departments. I support this bill because I believe it is immoral to deny the right of collective bargaining to working people, whether or not they happen to be students, and because negotiations with administrators have largely failed to adequately address the well-established issues that have been raised in the past by the Graduate Assistant Advisory Committee (GAAC). I have witnessed firsthand the evasiveness and indifference that administrators have shown towards these issues in meetings with GAAC representatives.

As for specific issues, the wages currently received by graduate student workers do not support even the most modest lifestyle in the DC/College Park area. As a personal example, in 2019, the difference between my monthly paycheck and my monthly rent payment was \$90.10. This means that 90% of my paycheck went to rent, leaving me \$90.10 for transportation, food, tuition payments, mandatory fees, medical expenses, and other necessities. I do not need to tell you that that is not enough; even if I worked twice the hours I currently do, I would barely be scraping by. While I have been living on external limited financial resources, many of my colleagues must take outside work in order to supplement their graduate assistant income, while struggling to meet the demands of a full time graduate-level course load. Most students are not as fortunate as I am; some are supporting families on incomes like this, and many more are in debt. It is unacceptable that we do not have the power to change these circumstances.

We know that administrators are invested in our success, because it is our success which defines the University. However, the only leverage we have right now is the empathy of our faculty and administration in hearing our concerns. Though this may occasionally produce a better working environment for us, it is unacceptable for us to not have the right to advocate for representation should we ever feel the need to. Granting student workers like us the right to collectively bargain would serve as a first step in recognizing the contributions we make to Maryland's institutions.

Please support the long-overdue passage of this bill.

Sincerely,

Emma Podietz

Master of Landscape Architecture Candidate

Department of Plant Science and Landscape Architecture

Teaching Assistant

University of Maryland, College Park, School of Agriculture and Natural Resources

Mailing address: 7112 Cedar Ave Apt 1 Takoma Park, MD 20912

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Kyle Pruitt

Uploaded by: Pruitt, Kyle

Position: FAV

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 one of the Fearless Student Employees, a coalition of hundreds of Maryland graduate workers that have been fighting to legalize collective bargaining for Maryland's graduate employees for years. I implore you to pass [HB 214/SB 658](#) and legalize collective bargaining rights for all of Maryland's higher education public employees now.

For graduate employees, collective bargaining rights are necessary for a number of reasons. First, the problems facing graduate employees have persisted across generations of graduate students, legislators, and administrators. Over the last 20 years there have been numerous attempts to legalize collective bargaining rights for graduate employees, reversing the 2001 ban. Minimum stipends have hardly increased during that time. UMCP data shows pervasiveness of issues facing graduate employees.

Second, the current meet and confer process is not working. Despite the best efforts of graduate employee leaders, university administration has been largely unresponsive to graduate employee concerns and issues--issues like unlivable wages, unregulated hours, unclear job expectations, insufficient grievance procedures, workplace abuse, harassment, and exploitation, disproportionate rates of mental health issues, and more.

Third, the University of Maryland does not stack up well against peer schools. UMCP is in the bottom-half of Big Ten and peer schools with regard to minimum graduate assistant stipends. UMCP has one of the highest discrepancies between cost-of-living and stipend amongst our peer institutions. Graduate assistants at all private institutions are already entitled to collective bargaining rights. Many public institutions in the Big 10 already enjoy collective bargaining rights, including: Rutgers University, University of Illinois, University of Michigan, University of Iowa, Michigan State, and the University of Wisconsin. Many more public university systems, like University of California and the University of Massachusetts also have unionized graduate employees. University of Maryland should be a fearless leader in higher education labor justice, but instead we have fallen behind the pack.

Next, though opponents will often suggest that collective bargaining corrupts the academic atmosphere, peer-reviewed research suggests the opposite: graduate student unionization actually improves the educational atmosphere by separating the employment relationship from the academic one.

Finally, there is broad, continuously expressed support among graduate employees. Hundreds of graduate employees, faculty, and campus groups at a number of USM institutions have advocated for the legalization of collective bargaining rights this year alone.

We implore you to legalize collective bargaining rights for all of Maryland's higher education public employees now. Maryland's higher education public employees deserve the dignity of basic employment rights and protections. They deserve the dignity of a contract.

Sincerely,

Kyle Prutt

Fearless Student Employees (FSE)
University of Maryland, College Park
fearlessstudentemployees@gmail.com

Michael Rozowski

Uploaded by: Rozowski, Michael

Position: FAV

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,

The contributions of graduate students to the university are vast and significant. Indeed, without graduate students much of the work that allows the university to function and be successful would not be performed. For example, while instructors provide lectures to the students at-large, they have minimal one-on-one interactions with their pupils. In contrast, teaching assistants like myself lead bi-weekly discussion sections, prepare problems and activities for students, administer quizzes, proctor exams, and grade mountains of work. Additionally, while professors secure funding from various government agencies and industry partners, it is the research assistants that deliver the promises this funding is contingent upon. Similarly, many metrics for the quality of the university are a function of its research contributions, which are quantified by publications, patents, and citations. It cannot be understated that scoring high in these areas depends upon graduate students' ability to perform quality research.

Thus, there is an obvious throughline between graduate student wellbeing and university quality, and there is an obvious connection between wellbeing, wages, benefits, and working conditions. Viewed in this way, it is only reasonable that the agents responsible for the success, quality, and essential daily operations of our institution, i.e., graduate students, be allowed to negotiate the terms of our employment, and therefore quality of life. As a result, I strongly urge you to support the Graduate Assistant Collective Bargaining Fairness Act (HB214 / SB 658).

Sincerely,

Michael Rozowski
Ph.D. Student, Department of Mathematics
Teaching Assistant
8904 57th Ave, Berwyn Heights, MD 20740
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Matthew Salzano

Uploaded by: Salzano, Matthew

Position: FAV

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 write in support of HB 214 / SB 658, which would give graduate student employees in Maryland Universities the collective bargaining rights they deserve like all Maryland state employees.

At every stage of university life, graduate employees are vital to the success of Maryland universities.

Take, for example, the high retention of students that the University of Maryland, College Park boasts (95.2% of first year students according to January 2019 information). This is due to graduate instructors like me. I teach at least 38 students a semester in a public speaking course. I take the time to connect personally with each of my students to ensure they feel heard, seen, and recognized amidst a crowd of almost 30,000 undergraduates at UMCP. While faculty lecture to 300 students, graduate employees make sure each student understand the content and go into the world ready to develop fearless ideas.

This continues in every corner of the university: Curriculum is revised at the granular level based on graduate student research, design, and feedback. Academic departments run like a well-oiled machine because of graduate employees in administrative positions. Laudable accomplishments from faculty across campus are made possible by graduate research and teaching assistants. Some of those graduate employees are even the ones making headlines for their laudable accomplishments.

We may be learning by doing; we may love what we're learning and doing. But this is not A reason to not give an employee the rights of an employee. Without graduate employees, this university would crumble.

If Maryland wishes to continue to boast its strong university system and compete with private universities and other prestigious state universities, it must focus on retaining graduate students. The first step to honoring their work is by giving them bargaining rights so that supervisors and employees can negotiate fair working conditions, especially hours and pay.

I urge you to support this bill so that graduate employees across the great state of Maryland can continue to develop fearless ideas and fearless students under fair conditions.

Sincerely,

Matthew Salzano
Ph.D. Student, Department of Communication
Graduate Teaching Assistant (Instructor of Record), COMM 107: Oral Communication
2130 Skinner Building

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Chris Samoray_FAV_SB658

Uploaded by: Samoray, Chris

Position: FAV

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,

As a graduate student employee working 20 hours per week and attending class full-time, my dedication to the University of Maryland-College Park is self-evident. As a communications assistant in a large College on campus, I produce content accessible to students, alumni, researchers and other professionals. Essentially, I act as a community liaison and set a public image of the University.

I am dedicated to both my studies and work on campus, and aspire for the University to succeed on a national and international platform. However, whether the University treats graduate student employees with similar respect is tenuous.

If the University of Maryland-College Park were as fearless as it claims, the right for students to collectively bargain would be a nonissue. Other universities that have such rights boast graduate students with improved life balance, a benefit that makes way for great success in graduate school. Moreover, much of that success is a reflection of a given university, which benefits similarly in promotion and research dollars .

If the University of Maryland-College Park wishes to position itself as a premier research and higher education institution, then the University must accept the responsibility of maintaining a professional relationship with graduate student employees. Simply allowing for the right to collectively bargain, if students so choose, as dictated in MD SB658, seems incremental progress in a forward-thinking direction in this regard. Thanks to the Committee for consideration of MD SB658.

Sincerely,

Chris Samoray
Masters, Plant Science & Landscape Architecture
Graduate Assistant
2139 Plant Sciences Building, 4291 Fieldhouse Drive, College Park, MD 20742
ATTN: Chris Samoray
samorayc@gmail.com

Brian Sarginger_FAV_SB658

Uploaded by: Sarginger, Brian

Position: FAV

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
PhD Candidate, History
Teaching Assistant Hist 208C
8713 34th Ave, College Park, MD 20740
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Eddie Schoute_FAV_SB658

Uploaded by: Schoute, Eddie

Position: FAV

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 write to you today about collective bargaining for graduate students. While classified as students, we perform and assist with many of the core goals of a university: education and research. While vital to the university, we are put in a vulnerable position, by law. The frequent issues that students encounter with supervisors and employers can only face the brick wall of the university administration which has no incentive to improve the situation. This causes a lot of stress and is to the detriment of the quality of the education system. By allowing students to collectively bargain we gain a tool to ensure a safe and effective work environment for all.

Sincerely,

Eddie Schoute
PhD Candidate
Research Assistant
3104 Atlantic Building 4254 Stadium Dr, College Park MD 20472
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Jacob Scocca SB 658 - Senate

Uploaded by: Scocca, Jacob

Position: FAV

Delores G. Kelley, Chair, 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 this testimony to express my support for SB 658. This has been my first year as a graduate student. I left my draining corporate job to pursue my passions while making a positive impact on society through the gift of knowledge and learning. This transition has been entirely difficult as I moved all the way from California and am struggling to make ends meet. My rent, a single bedroom in a home, costs half of my income. My father is kind enough to send me additional funds each month or I wouldn't be able to afford my car insurance for my reliable 2004 Honda Civic. I, and many others, don't have the financial means if an emergency were to happen. We depend on the generosity of our families, friends, and community. I would love to get a second job, but I don't have the time. I do school-related work for 60 hours a week as it is and can barely afford the copays for my mental health care that I go to due to the stress. I hope you take the time to consider that many of us are struggling very much and SB 658 would begin to ameliorate this for many of us. Thank you for reading.

Sincerely,

Jacob Scocca
Ph.D. Student, Criminology and Criminal Justice
Research Assistant
3909 Lawrence St, Brentwood, MD 20722
Jscocca@umd.edu

Troy Sewell

Uploaded by: Sewell, Troy

Position: FAV

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 to urge your support for the Graduate Assistant Collective Bargaining Fairness Act (SB 658). I have been a PhD student in the Department of Physics for over four years and have worked as both a Research and Teaching Assistant at the University of Maryland.

To say the work done by Graduate Assistants is valuable to the university is an understatement; without our contributions the university would cease to function. While professors do the important work of giving lectures and securing grant funding, many of the laborious aspects of education and research done at the university require large pools of graduate student working many hours a week to get done. From leading small discussion sections to grading exams, maintaining lab equipment, and conducting much of the actual research itself, the university needs Graduate Assistants to produce the top notch education and research we are known for.

With the functioning and prestige of the university dependent on a strong graduate student body, I'm afraid that we are vulnerable to losing some outstanding candidates due to working conditions of Graduate Assistants. The cost of living in the DC metro area is one of the highest in the country and the typical salaries we see as graduate students leave few affordable options available and little room to save money and achieve financial security. Graduate student lifestyles are often ones of precarity and many talented candidates will choose to move to industry instead of pursuing graduate degrees, seeing the endeavor as a choice of lost wages and lifestyle sacrifices. Those that do enter graduate education may also choose other universities due to better pay and benefits.

As essential contributors to the university we deserve the right to organize for better working conditions, and that is why I am writing to urge support for the Graduate Assistant Collective Bargaining Fairness Act (SB 658).

Sincerely,

Troy Sewell
PhD Student, Department of Physics
Graduate Research Assistant
6907 6th St NW, Washington, DC 20012
tjsewell@gmail.com

Benjamin Shaw

Uploaded by: Shaw, Benjamin

Position: FAV

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

Adelaida Shelley

Uploaded by: Shelley, Adelaida

Position: FAV

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 to express my support for the passage of HB214 / SB 658, known as the Graduate Assistant Collective Bargaining Fairness Act. As a graduate assistant (GA) at the University of Maryland, College Park I play an integral role in the continuous operation of university functions. For example, over this past academic year I have taught two separate undergraduate courses on the topic of American history, politics, and culture. These were designed, taught, and graded entirely by me with little to no supervision. It goes without saying that had I not been there to teach those classes they simply would not have taken place, and my students would have been left unserved and uneducated—which would violate university principles and purposes.

As well as teaching students, I am also the co-chair of the Graduate Assistant Advisory Committee (GAAC), a body that represents the 4,000 graduate assistants currently employed by UMD College Park. GAAC is the meet-and-confer body that was created a few years back in lieu of extending collective bargaining rights to GAs. Its purpose is to develop a line of communication and mutual cooperation between graduate assistants and the graduate school administration. Over the years however we have encountered repeated problems in getting administrators to ameliorate labor conditions on campus. We have found that, without collective bargaining rights, it is extraordinarily difficult to get what GAs need from the school in order to create a safe and healthy working environment. I adamantly believe that the right to unionize would allow GAAC to advocate for the needs of GAs much more effectively and successfully.

Thank you for your consideration,

Adelaida Shelley
PhD Student, Department of American Studies
Teaching Assistant, Department of American Studies
Co-chair, Graduate Assistant Advisory Committee

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ashelley@umd.edu

UMES

Uploaded by: Simmons, Jocelyn

Position: FAV

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,

Graduate Students within the University of Maryland Eastern Shore support the HB 214/ SB 658 bill moving forward and are in accord with graduate assistants who attend all universities within the University System of Maryland.

This 20-year ban has prevented graduate assistants from having a say in how their education and career path are determined. It is time for a change and for graduate assistants to finally have a voice in the terms of their contracts.

Graduate assistants know first-hand what is needed in each institution for students to progress and succeed to make the University System of Maryland better. It is imperative to allow this bill to be passed so GA's can feel not only important but included in decision making that affects their lives.

Sincerely,

Jocelyn Simmons
Graduate Student Government President
Doctoral Student, Department of Food and Agricultural Science
Graduate Research Assistant
University of Maryland Eastern Shore
Spaulding Hall Room 1105, Princess Anne, MD 21853
Email: jasimmons@umes.edu

Izidora Skracic

Uploaded by: Skracic, Izidora

Position: FAV

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 SB 658 and strongly urge the State of Maryland to recognize the crucial right of graduate students to collectively bargain. Last year, as a second-year full time PhD student my package consisted of the following: (1) taking three classes each semester as a student, (2) getting paid for 10 hours a week as a Research Assistant, and (3) getting paid for 10 hours a week as a Teaching Assistant. As a Research Assistant, I evaluated a public health initiative in Delaware providing free contraception to all women. In this role, I scheduled and conducted interviews, organized and filed data, coded data, analyzed data, and drafted conclusions and recommendations as to the success of the initiative. As a Teaching Assistant, I taught content, I led weekly section discussions, I graded, and I emailed—a lot. I facilitated the students' course experience and ensure they are receiving the appropriate accommodations if they are athletes, have a disability, English is their second language, or are just having a tough semester.

While the Research and Teaching Assistant jobs are very different, they both require high levels of flexibility because they deal with real life human beings in different circumstances. It would be detrimental to the research project for me to say, "I've already done my 10 hours for the week; I'll just do it next week." Why? Because I might lose the participant over the weekend. Similarly, it is impossible to grade and provide feedback for 40 papers within the allotted 10 weekly hours, but at the same time students expect and deserve timely and constructive response.

This year, as a third-year PhD student, I am Instructor of Record for a course I TA-ed in my first year. I now complete all the tasks that a Teaching Assistant did, in addition to preparing and holding lectures. This is an assignment that is considered a 20-hour assistantship. At the same time I am expected to work on my dissertation, and to continue working on research projects that I was previously a Research Assistant on. Should I choose to drop these research projects due to lack of time and funding, I would lose any hope for authorship on the projects that I did so much of the ground work for. Without authorship on publications, my chances of an appropriate job post-PhD plummet.

A lot is expected of us as graduate assistants, for not much pay in return. While we may request to work with a specific professor, project, or course, not all requests can be fulfilled. Even if it may not be our first, second, or third choice, we understand the reality--we are assigned to tasks that have funding. All we ask in return is to be given the right to bargain collectively to attempt to slightly level out this egregiously imbalanced power dynamic.

Sincerely,

Izidora Skracic
PhD Student, Department of Family Science
Research Assistant & Teaching Assistant
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College Park, MD 20742

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Damien Smith Pfister

Uploaded by: Smith Pfister, Damien

Position: FAV

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,

Higher education is under assault. From the slashing of state support for public colleges and universities, to the errant but widespread belief that professors inculcate a liberal ideology into their students, to the rapid replacement of full-time positions with adjunct labor, the position of institutions of higher education is no longer a given in the United States. Indeed, the pressures to professionalize, to instrumentalize, and to monetize all educational activities are making universities miserable places to work. If institutions of higher education are to have a future beyond offering a playground for the elite and vocational training for the masses, we must start to improve the conditions of some of the most vulnerable workers in higher education, graduate students. In many ways, graduate students are the very core of the contemporary university landscape: their energy and shared cultural frame of reference helps connect them to the undergraduate teaching mission while their insight and work ethic develops a university's research profile and prestige.

Graduate students recognize that graduate education is an apprenticeship: in exchange for roles as research or teaching assistants, graduate students learn the craft of their discipline in order to teach the next generation of students and develop new knowledge in the humanities and sciences. As apprentices, graduate students don't get rich—they take monklike vows of poverty with the hopes that a brighter future will make spending 5-7 years of their life as an apprentice a worthwhile endeavor. As more privileged members of the higher education landscape, we have a responsibility to make sure that these apprenticeships are not exploitative; that graduate students are fairly compensated financially; that they have routes to have grievances fairly addressed; that they are not worked excessively. We ought not replicate the medieval model of apprenticeship in how we situate graduate students in our community. We can do better.

If we improve the financial security of the most vulnerable members in our community, then we will all benefit. Right now, at the University of Maryland, current graduate students have to take on extra jobs just to make ends meet, which trades off with their studies, increases their time to degree, and diminishes the amount of time they can devote to the students they teach. Given the increased academic competition accompanying Maryland's entry into the Big 10, these are sacrifices that we cannot afford. Of course, the inadequacy of graduate student stipends deters many people, especially those not from privileged backgrounds, from pursuing graduate school. The math simply doesn't work out, so our applicant pools are thinner, whiter, richer, and more male than they otherwise might be. Without adequate compensation, the best and brightest go straight to industry jobs, which, over time, will weaken the foundations of higher education.

Collective bargaining is no panacea, but it seems the only alternative given the lack of movement

on issues related to graduate employment over the last decade. The growth in the stipend has simply not kept up with rising rents in the D.C. Metro area and the increasing demands of graduate students exceeds their contractual obligations. There's a saying in democratic theory that captures the current state: "when systems face crisis, they must reform or face revolution." A prior reform—increasing graduate student stipends—would probably have headed off the revolutionary demand for collective bargaining; now, the reform of collective bargaining is needed to head off an even more revolutionary demand. If the University of Maryland is to maintain and strengthen its position as a top public university, something simply must be done about the situation of graduate students and HB 214/SB 658 seems like a step in the right direction.

Sincerely,
Damien Smith Pfister
Associate Professor, Department of Communication
2116 Skinner Building
College Park, MD
402.802.1441, dsp@umd.edu

Hyeonjin Song

Uploaded by: Song, Hyeonjin

Position: FAV

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 a graduate student and graduate assistant at the University of Maryland. I write to you today to urge your support on HB 214 / SB 658.

I request your support as the Maryland State Legislature to allow graduate students the same rights afforded to the employees of any other organization: the right to organize and the right to choose to collectively bargain. We as graduate Assistants, do a lot of work at the University and we request you to give us the right to bargain as a body, just like any other state employee. There is a lot of variation in pay among graduate students and many have taken loans just so that they can continue living healthily. I personally don't receive enough money monthly that I can pay all my bills, I have to work extra hours besides my assistantship and get assistance from my parents to be able make ends meet. Once I pay for my rental, I can't make a healthy living with those remaining money.

I am requesting you to consider supporting the legislation to allow us to bargain collectively and improve how graduate students live while carrying out important research and work at the flagship institution of Maryland.

Sincerely,

Hyeonjin Song
PhD student in Epidemiology, School of Public Health
Teaching Assistant,
9530 Baltimore Avenue Apt 529A
songhj@umd.edu

Dustin Swanson

Uploaded by: Swanson, Dustin

Position: FAV

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 to provide my support for SB 658 and urge your support of the measure to provide graduate assistants in Maryland with the rights granted to other federal and state employees.

Before returning to school to pursue my PhD, I was a successful Naval officer. In that career I witnessed numerous mental health problems due to the stress and demands of military life. It wasn't until I returned to this environment and began to experience that process of graduate studies that I fully appreciated the effect on graduate assistants' mental health. Indeed, graduate school is a time of transition and development for individuals that this state and country will rely on to shape the future. This transition brings with it a shift of expectations to a framework of professionalism. A graduate assistant is expected to work a set amount of hours, but also to accomplish the work required by his or her supervisor, whether it be in the lab or in the classroom, regardless of the time constraints. The graduate assistant is expected to take time for self-development. The graduate assistant is expected to produce a product that is unique and valuable to the scientific community. The graduate student is a professional.

As professionals whose ultimate purpose is to provide a product that pushes our state and country into the future, it is vital that the institutions we serve under provide us with the rights required to enable that productivity. Graduate students have mental health crisis rates at similar rates to veterans. It is easy to say that these should not be similar because being a veteran comes with an inherent explanation for this crisis. However, that is the insidious thing about mental health issues. Mental health issues do not require an instigating event. Instead they are a symptom of support from one's environment. I am writing to tell you that the environment that we are cultivating graduate students in is not one of support, but of intense pressure and competition. If we want to solve the problems of today and tomorrow, then we have to do better. We need to provide my colleagues with the support that they deserve. In this case, this means simply allowing us to have a full, legally significant voice at the table. We can negotiate ways to remedy the mental health crisis for ourselves, we just need a chance.

Lest you believe the mental health of the graduate student is not a significant issue, I would remind you that this is an issue of competition as well. The state of Maryland does not have a monopoly on quality higher education. It competes for the talent of my peers with dozens of institutions around the country. In denying this state's graduate assistants similar rights, Maryland places itself at a severe competitive disadvantage. Case in point, a midwestern university offered myself and a colleague more than 7000 dollars more per year in compensation.

That is coupled with a cost of living that is approximately two thirds of what is required here in the College Park area. That is a yearly differential of approximately 19000 dollars. Over the course of a five year PhD program that is \$96,000. My colleague is likely leaving this state in part due to this disparity. That is a tangible loss for Maryland.

We are not asking for much. Just the same right that is granted to all other public employees.

Sincerely,

Dustin Swanson
PhD Student, Department of Physics
Research Assistant
3404 Tulane Drive, Apt. 32, Hyattsville, MD 20783
dlswanso@umd.edu

D. J. Teal

Uploaded by: Teal, D.J.

Position: FAV

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 to support the swift and definitive passage of SB 658, allowing for the graduate students to legally decide whether collective bargaining is best for them.

Collective bargaining has a history of improving the lives and wellbeing of many workers, and as employees of the University of Maryland graduate students deserve this right as much as any other employees. We work to teach the next generation of Maryland scholars, professionals, artists, and other highly skilled workers to better the lives, economy, and complement the myriad of other Marylanders that make this state the way it is today.

Unlike many other jobs, disparities arise from department to department on campus, with pay varying drastically for the same amount of labor. This is unacceptable, forcing graduate students to undergo even more stress than is already placed upon them with expectations of teaching, classes, and research. It is untenable to then place the extraordinary stress of near-poverty simply because of the department they are in.

Given the fantastic contributions of these employees to the State of Maryland, there's simply no excuse to deny the right to collectively bargain for reasonable living conditions and fair compensation for these contributions. I look forward to seeing SB 658 enable a better, brighter future for our state and our university.

Sincerely,

D. J. Teal
PhD Student, Astronomy Department
Research Assistant

University of Maryland
Department of Astronomy
Room 1113 PSC Bldg. 415
College Park, MD 20742-2421

teal@astro.umd.edu

Mireia Toda Cosi

Uploaded by: Toda Cosi, Mireia

Position: FAV

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 this letter to you to urge you to support the Graduate Assistant Collective Bargaining Fairness Act (HB 0214 / SB 658). My name is Mireia Toda Cosi and I am a Ph.D. candidate and a student representative at University of Maryland, College Park (UMCP). Supporting the bill is taking a stance for our rights. It is asking to allow students, those who so choose, to bargain our own wages and working conditions, a long overdue matter. The impossibility to do so, belittles our role in the university in comparison to other state employees, who already enjoy this and other rights. We, graduate students, are vital part of the success of the university and even the faculty. We are at the core of this symbiotic relationship that produces top-notch research. Even when our administration repeatedly attempts to keep at bay our concerns and needs, students never cease in their efforts.

Current wages are heavily dependent on different departments, which are not allowed to go below a minimum. However, said minimum, is scarcely over \$20,000 per annum at UMCP for a 9.5 months appointment. For an international student, that means an after-tax monthly pay of about \$1700. From this pay, \$1631 (with an extra \$250 if you are an international student) revert to the university in fees. This translates into a whole month of pay being taken away. Not only that, but the luckiest student finds a reasonable rent for \$700, while many pay far higher prices. The pay is in exchange for an alleged 20 weekly hours of work. On this salary, students also have to study full-time, research, and publish. If that were not enough, 20 hours can become more with the little control there is over the duties carried out by Graduate Assistant.

This situation results in many students taking up side jobs, and requiring more time to graduate. It is common to come across graduate students working in 2-3 places, if they are even in the position to do so. International students are not allowed to work outside of campus, much less on top of the 20 hours a week. The meager pay and the lack of opportunities to work at the institution over the summer, leave students forlorn, incapable of saving up. It is a never-ending attempt of staying afloat. This situation hinders our academic careers, also harming the university's own success. What company would from distracted employees?

Being able to bargain our own wages would allow for an open dialog with the university, and for students to regain some power and respect. It would improve the mental and physical well-being of our student body. Not only that, but it would yield a positive impact on the work produced at the university. In turn, it would render more benefits and save costs to the institution in the long term (i.e., reducing the need to provide counseling).

Thanks a lot for your attention and consideration. I hope that my testimony has helped provide insight into the beneficial impact of the bill, upon both, the student body and the institution itself.

Sincerely,

Mireia Toda Cosi
Ph.D. student, Second Language Acquisition
Administrative Assistant
4605 Clemson Road
College Park, 20740, MD
mireiate93@gmail.com

Daniel Trettel_FAV_SB658

Uploaded by: Trettel, Daniel

Position: FAV

Delores G. Kelley, Chair, 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 to express my support for the passage of HB 214 / SB 658, known as the Graduate Assistant Collective Bargaining Fairness Act. I am a 3rd-year biochemistry PhD graduate “student” (specifically a research assistant and teaching assistant) in the Biochemistry and Chemistry Department at the University of Maryland, College Park. In addition, I was an undergraduate here and was the captain of the Varsity Track and Field team during that time. I have lived and breathed UMD for nearly a decade. I put “student” in quotations because I firmly believe it’s a dangerous misnomer that allows the University system to mischaracterize us, our work, and our importance in carrying out the University’s mission in order to exploit our labor with minimal repercussions. To be blunt, there is very little “student” about being a graduate student and having the ability to collectively bargain would be a step in the right direction for our rights. Let me explain.

As an RA and TA, I have several jobs I’m responsible for juggling that are mutually exclusive to one another. For example during this semester I am a TA for an organic chemistry lecture which entails me being responsible for leading discussion for 200 undergraduates. Past semesters, I have never taught the same course twice. In addition, I also have my own thesis research. This all is 50 hours of work a week, I don’t know many that work less, while living in an ever-more expensive area. Both aspects add to the University’s mission - I am doing my part to ensure a quality education for students while pushing the frontiers of human knowledge - with the University principally benefitting from this labor.

Meanwhile, the Graduate School Dean, Steve Fetter, has argued that the University is doing graduates, such as myself, a service by allowing us to learn how to teach and do research. This take is incredibly demeaning. I cannot think of another job where one has a Bachelor’s degree yet must accept student status during their first 5-6 years on the job because they are still learning the ropes. Again, I may be learning the ropes, but I am producing real value that the University is capitalizing on. I, and others, have no recourse to improve this - we are simply at the whims of the powers that be. This is an asymmetric power balance that the ability to collectively bargain will ameliorate.

Graduate “students” are the backbone of the University. We teach the classes, we produce the research, we make the University what it is. I am arguing that we are a stunning bargain that the University has been cashing in on for far too long and that UMD can do better. There is a slogan around campus, “fearless ideas”, that to me represents the ability to try something new in the hope of creating a better world. For the majority of graduates, that fearless idea is the ability to carve out our own future. Please support the passage of this bill and thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Daniel Trettel
Doctoral Candidate, Biochemistry
Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry
University of Maryland, College Park
2402 Muskogee Street, Adelphi MD
dantrettel@gmail.com

Max Trevor

Uploaded by: Trevor, Max

Position: FAV

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

Bachelor's in Physics

Research Assistant, UMD College Park Physics Department

4300 Woodberry St, University Park, MD 20782

mtrevor@umd.edu

David Van Horn

Uploaded by: Van Horn, David

Position: FAV

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,

Graduate students are the lifeblood of every research university. Ask any faculty member to tell you who does the actual work of advancing knowledge in their field and they invariably say: graduate students. Yet despite their central role in the work of a university, they are consistently exploited. They deserve basic rights as workers and collective bargaining to combat this exploitation.

I am writing today, just as I did a year ago, to express my strongest support for HB0214/SB0658 and urge the Maryland Legislature and Governor to legally recognize graduate assistants as employees of the University System of Maryland.

In particular, I strongly support graduate workers rights to include:

- Legal contracts
- Social security benefits
- Collective bargaining on employment conditions

I am joined by a broad coalition of graduate student government organizations, including the UMCP Graduate Student Government, The Diamondback Editorial Board, and the Computer Science Graduate Student Executive Council, and many others.

It is well documented that USM graduate assistants are not paid a living wage and 69% of GAs report their salary being insufficient. GAs also consistently work more than their university limit of 20 hours per week, which constitutes systematic wage theft. The Associate Provost and Dean of the Graduate School at UMCP, Steve Fetter, seemingly acknowledged and endorsed this widespread wage theft in his testimony to the Maryland House Appropriations Committee, saying “Doing original research and scholarship is not an easy thing, and it requires long hours, regardless of whether you have an assistantship or not.”

Fetter also made much of the unique relationship between graduate students and their faculty mentors, which is indeed a special and important relationship. But I would like to stress that the primary relationship between the university and graduate assistants is one of employer and employee, and that the mentor-mentee relationship can survive only if it is entered into in good faith and on equitable terms. It is absurd to think that recognizing the legal rights of GAs as workers would somehow compromise the relationship between faculty and graduate students. On the contrary it is *necessary* for it to work at all.

I would also like to express my deep concern over aspects of Fetter's testimony to the Maryland House Appropriations Committee from last year, during which he cited tuition remission toward student income. Not only is this completely misleading: (1) tuition remission is not income, nor is it considered income for any other university employees who receive it, (2) graduate students pay tuition, which is remitted via assistantships, throughout their tenure as graduate students, even though they usually stop taking classes after the first two years of their graduate degree, and (3) Fetter cited **out-of-state** tuition figures, even though he is well aware of the fact that graduate students are charged (the significantly lower) in-state rates. Every faculty member who has written a grant application (effectively: everyone) knows this. It's one thing for the Dean of the Graduate School to argue against the rights of his constituents. It is quite another to do so in bad faith and with knowingly false testimony.

On a final note, I ask the Finance Committee to take note of the current situation at the University of California at Santa Cruz. By not paying graduate workers a living wage adjusted to the rapidly rising cost of living, the university has been essentially shut down by a graduate worker strike. In fact, the whole University of California System seems at risk. Intimidation and threats from the administration have soured relations with students, workers, faculty, and alumni. Potentially irreparable damage has already occurred. I urge the committee to see proper recognition of graduate workers as university employees as a first, but significant, step toward avoiding the UC situation coming to Maryland.

Sincerely,

David Van Horn
PhD, Department of Computer Science & UMIACS
Associate Professor
5250 Iribe Center
8125 Paint Branch Drive
College Park, MD 20742
dvanhorn@cs.umd.edu

Sarah Vick

Uploaded by: Vick, Sara

Position: FAV

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,

Graduate students do the work of many faculty and staff at the University of Maryland and our work is essential to campus daily life. In addition to teaching as a standalone instructor of courses, many of us are called upon to write letters of recommendation and act as references for current and former students. We care about the students we teach and deserve to be treated like professional members of the community whose work is valuable. We matter and the university system could not operate without us.

We deserve to be officially considered to be what we effectively are: employees.

Sincerely,

Sarah Vick
PhD Student, Department of Communication
Graduate Teaching Assistant
5816 31st PL Hyattsville, MD
svick@umd.edu

Noel Warford

Uploaded by: Warford, Noel

Position: FAV

Delores G. Kelley, Chair
Brian J. Feldman, Vice Chair
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Annapolis, MD 21401

SB 658
Supporting

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

One of the most difficult things about being a graduate student is the feeling of not having a voice. In the face of peers who are having a tough time or working amongst faculty who can sink your career if you set a foot wrong, it is difficult to feel that what we say matters. This is why I support collective bargaining rights for graduate students. It will give us a voice in what matters.

I have to have another job to live with a reasonable standard in academia. Many of my friends don't have that, and need to rely on a family member or partner just to pay rent. This shouldn't be. Collective bargaining lets us fight for a living wage without having to be beholden to whether or not the department or our advisor simply decides if we deserve it on a case-by-case basis.

I hope you will consider voting in favor of collective bargaining rights for graduate students.

Sincerely,

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Kevin Weber

Uploaded by: Weber, Kevin

Position: FAV

Delores G. Kelley, Chair
Brian J. Feldman, Vice Chair
3 East Miller Senate Office Building
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SB 658
Supporting

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

I am writing to urge you to support any legislation which grants collective bargaining rights to graduate employees at institutions of higher education in Maryland. The right of bargaining to represent one's own interests in any situation of employment is necessary in order to avoid being taken advantage of by employers. However, graduate employees unlike any other employees of the state of Maryland have been denied this right.

I am at the start of my second semester as a graduate teaching assistant at UMCP. Though the instructors I have worked for have been understanding for the most part, I do feel I have suffered due to flaws in the current system. The purpose of phd programs is to gain extremely rigorous and specialized training in order to become an expert capable of performing original research. Due to this graduate students are expected to take on a large quantity of rigorous coursework, as well as starting to get involved with research groups as soon as possible. This leads to graduate students putting fifty plus hours per week into their schoolwork. This is by itself a good thing, as graduate students are preparing to become researchers themselves, and thus extremely rigorous academic work is necessary and expected. However, in addition to this we are expected to work twenty hours a week as teaching assistants in order to make a living. On its own this would still not be too big of a problem, however the TA's rarely take up only twenty hours a week. As a personal example, in my current position I am expected to grade three large assignments per student per week. Assuming this grading takes a minimal amount of time (5-8 minutes per assignment) I spend upwards of sixteen hours per week just grading. Compounding that with the six hours spent in the actual lab, the office hours, the preparation, and the weekly meeting, I end up spending an average of twenty five to twenty eight hours per week on my TA (well above the allotted twenty). This serves to severely distract me from my academic work, and my compensation is based on the incorrect assumption that I am working only twenty hours.

As the student population rises every year there is more and more work to be done. As this work level has risen universities have been pushing more and more of it onto their graduate TA's. This leads to us being expected to work well more than the allotted twenty hours per week. As there is only so much time in a day, these increased responsibilities lead to graduate students having to cut time from their academic pursuits (as I have outlined personally above). Advisors and departments however are not happy about this, and thus we are pulled in two different directions. Your advisor is telling you that more time needs to be dedicated to your schoolwork, and the instructor you work for is telling you that you need to get all of your building TA responsibilities taken care of with neither often wanting to budge on deadlines. This not only has an adverse

effect on graduate student mental health, but also comes at the expense of our future abilities as we often simply cannot find enough time to devote to our mastering of the particular subject we are studying.

There is a reason that the right to collectively bargain is given to all other state employees. No matter the specifics of the situation, if a group of workers are not allowed to negotiate on their own behalf, unfair amounts of excess work will be pushed onto them for no additional compensation. For when there is additional work to be done or cuts to be made those in charge will obviously take the path of least resistance, which is to push the work onto those who cannot defend themselves. This is a natural effect of workers lacking representative rights and will never be avoided for graduate student workers unless they are given rights of collective bargaining.

Sincerely,

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SB 658 Written Testimony UMCP

Uploaded by: Fetter, Steve

Position: UNF



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SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE

Senate Bill 658

Higher Education - Collective Bargaining - Graduate Assistants
(Graduate Assistant Collective Bargaining Fairness Act)

February 21, 2020

Urging an Unfavorable Report

I write to share my concerns regarding Senate Bill 658, which would authorize graduate assistants to collectively bargain. Collective bargaining is not in the overall interests of graduate students and graduate programs.

Graduate assistants are students first, and their duties as graduate assistants are part of their education. Some graduate programs expect or require all students to teach. Most teaching assistants lead discussion or lab sections under the guidance of a faculty member, gaining valuable teaching experience and learning the subject more deeply by learning to explain it to others. Research assistantships allow students to learn to do original research under the guidance of a faculty mentor—research that often is identical to their doctoral dissertation research.

The university's "Meet and Confer" process—where an elected group of GAs meets with the Provost, the Vice President for Finance and Administration, and me at least once each semester to discuss concerns and solutions—has been a useful avenue to address student concerns and solutions for the past ten years.

Meet and Confer outcomes include an 18% increase in minimum stipends since July 2018. As shown in the attached table, stipends are now above the cost of attendance and the Big Ten median. Newly developed policies include parental leave, time away from duties, and a grievance process. A Graduate Academic Counselor position was created and filled this semester, to help students access university services and support. Expectation-setting meetings between GAs and their supervisors are now required, and statements of mutual expectation developed to guide them. We commissioned a study to examine concerns that GAs were working much more than 20 hours per week; the study showed GAs spend an average of 18 hours per week on their duties, with 6 of those hours contributing to a student's own research.

The "Meet and Confer" process provides GAs with many of the perceived benefits that collective bargaining offers, including the right to engage a labor organization to assist them in this process. In the ten years that the "Meet and Confer" process has been in place, GAs have declined to engage a labor organization.

In addition to the “Meet and Confer” process, graduate students serve on the Graduate Council, which sets policy for graduate education, including graduate assistantships. I also meet regularly with leadership of the Graduate Student Government.

The Graduate School encourages students to report violations of Graduate School and University policy, including excessive hours, harassment, unacceptable behavior, or unsafe conditions. The Graduate Student Ombudsman provides confidential and informal assistance in resolving conflicts and promotes fair and equitable treatment. The Graduate School can take formal action to investigate and resolve problematic situations as needed. Collective bargaining would limit the University’s ability to address problems for all graduate students as they arise and reduce the current flexibility to tailor solutions to the situation of a particular student.

Advocates of collective bargaining argue that it will lead to higher stipends. They have suggested more than \$36,000 per year as the appropriate stipend level. Raising stipends to that level would cause a 73 percent increase in GA expenditures and a \$60 million per year increase in instructional expenditure, requiring more than a 10 percent increase in State appropriation or a 10 percent increase in tuition. If State appropriations and tuition did not rise to cover this increase, the result would be a 40 percent decrease in the number of GA appointments—and a corresponding decrease in the size of doctoral programs, the production of PhDs, and the contribution of our PhD programs to the regional economy.

Advocates also claim collective bargaining will lead to additional benefits. GAs already have access to the same health plans as faculty and staff. Their student status exempts them from Social Security and Medicare tax, but employee benefits could lead to additional taxes. The University would need to withhold 7.65% from a GA’s taxable compensation and pay an equal employer’s share. Unemployment insurance and union dues are an additional cost. Expenditure for a GA could increase by more than 17%, with no increase in student take-home pay. Moreover, students whose duties are not related to teaching or research could be excluded from GA appointments, or much of their tuition benefit could be subject to income tax.

Research assistantships, which are included in SB 658, are particularly difficult to adapt to collective bargaining. There often is a large overlap between the research a student does for a faculty member as part of the faculty member’s research grant or contract, and the research the student does for his or her dissertation. The former is essential training for the latter, and it is often impossible to determine where one ends and the other begins. Completing a dissertation—a piece of original research and scholarship—requires long hours of effort regardless of whether the student has a research assistantship, and the amount of effort required for the dissertation cannot be affected by collective bargaining. For this reason, most institutions that have collective bargaining for teaching assistants do not extend collective bargaining to research assistants. Of the five Big Ten institutions with collective bargaining for GAs, only Rutgers includes research assistants, and the contract specifies that it has no impact on the work needed to satisfy degree requirements.

Finally, collective bargaining takes a long time, and stable relationships are inherently impossible when the union representation is inexperienced and entirely turns over every few years, as students graduate. If collective bargaining is permitted, students who might support union membership will leave campus soon after any election is held. A union will already be in place, and students who come after will have no say in whether it should exist. It will be difficult to adjust or dislodge, which would be unfair to future generations of students.

The Graduate School is an advocate for all graduate students, including GAs. We want all graduate students to succeed and we want to help resolve any problems that arise. Collective Bargaining is not a path to this outcome that is in the best interests of UMD graduate students, or the University.

Thank you for the opportunity to express my concerns about Senate Bill 658.

Steve Fetter
Associate Provost and Dean, The Graduate School
University of Maryland, College Park

Minimum Graduate Assistant Stipends and Collective Bargaining Status
Big Ten Public Universities, Spring 2020, 20 hour/week appointment

Institution	Minimum Stipend		Collective Bargaining?		
	Academic Year	Full Year	TA	AA	RA
Rutgers ¹	28,569	32,204	Y	Y	Y
Michigan ²	21,779		Y	Y	
Penn State	20,790	27,720			
Wisconsin	20,000	24,443			
Iowa	19,629	23,982	Y	Y	
Maryland³	18,979	23,973			
Illinois	17,788	23,717	Y	Y	
Ohio State	17,280	23,040			
Michigan St ⁴	16,185	21,580	Y		
Purdue	15,448	18,538			
Minnesota	15,343	20,456			
Nebraska	10,000	13,333			
Indiana	9,910	11,892			

¹Standard appointment is 15 hours per week.

²No minimum full-year stipend.

³For 9.5-month appointments as of 1/1/20. All TAs, and 68% of all academic-year GA appointments, are 9.5-month appointments. The minimum stipend for 9-month appointments is \$17,980.

⁴For TA. The minimum academic-year stipend for non-union AAs and RAs is \$13,895.

Average Cost of Attendance and Average Stipend, AY19-20 (9 months)

Cost	Graduate Student	Graduate Assistant
Tuition (10 credits/semester)	\$32,500	—
Mandatory fees	\$1,635	\$1,635
Off-campus rent and utilities	\$9,314	\$9,314
Food and meals	\$5,120	\$5,120
Personal expenses	\$1,144	\$1,144
Books and supplies	\$624	\$624
Health insurance	\$1,298	\$572
Transportation	\$522	\$522
Average cost of attendance	\$52,157	\$18,931
Average academic-year stipend	—	\$21,135

Tuition is the maximum covered for graduate assistants at the non-resident rate. Transportation cost is from the Bureau of Labor Statistic's Consumer Expenditure Survey for public transportation in the Northeast region. (Mandatory fees cover shuttle bus service to most areas where graduate assistants live.) Other costs are estimated by the Office of Student Financial Aid according to federal guidelines; see <https://financialaid.umd.edu/resources-policies/cost-attendance>.

SB 658 Graduate Student Collective Bargaining

Uploaded by: Rittle, Alex

Position: UNF



SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE
Senate Bill 658
Higher Education – Collective Bargaining – Graduate Assistants
February 21, 2020
Urging an Unfavorable Report

Chair Kelley, Vice Chair Feldman and committee members, thank you for the opportunity to share our thoughts on Senate Bill 658. The bill authorizes graduate assistants at the University System of Maryland (USM) to collectively bargain.

Since 2009, the USM has worked to improve the status of the USM’s approximately 6000 graduate assistants (based on a recent survey of all institutions), including the establishment of a “Meet and Confer” process that gives these students (and adjunct faculty) the opportunity to engage a labor representative to represent them in discussions with campus administrators. The USM adopted a Policy on Graduate Assistantships, which addressed the following issues:

- Due process protection and grievance rights;
- Participation in the shared governance process;
- Stipends comparable to those at peer institutions; and
- Clarification of the university’s expectations re duties and time commitments; for example, a full-time assistantship requires the student to work an average of 20 hours per week.

Maryland collective bargaining law includes University System of Maryland (USM) employees generally. The statute expressly excludes from collective bargaining “a student employee, including a teaching assistant or a comparable position, fellow, or post-doctoral intern.” The University System of Maryland remains comfortable with the existing law because:

- Currently, in addition to a monetary stipend, most USM graduate assistants receive a tuition-free education, fully subsidized state health care, and stipend increases in each year of a contract.
- The “Meet and Confer” process provides graduate assistants with many of the perceived benefits that collective bargaining offers, including the right to engage a labor organization to assist them in this process.
- Repealing the law would create a confusing maze of litigation and legal expense over which “groups” or “class” of graduate students may be allowed to organize.

- The cost of negotiation, and potential for productivity slowdowns for students, outweighs any perceived benefit.
- Unionization neglects the disparity in the needs of graduate assistants and the diversity and cultures of fellow graduate students.
- USM graduate assistants enjoy rights concerning workload, grievance procedure, personal leave, professional evaluation, and discipline.

There is a concept and ongoing process within the USM known as “shared governance.” This is a very important process that has served the USM higher education community well for many years. USM employs a Council of University System Students, a Council of University System Faculty and a Council of University System Staff and even a Council of University System Presidents.

Each council is empowered to continually raise issues of concern to the Chancellor and the USM Board of Regents. Shared governance is a collaborative working relationship which provides the necessary follow through to address issues and concerns. USM is a diverse system with 12 degree-granting institutions and 2 Regional Higher Education Centers located throughout the State of Maryland. Issues ranging from salaries, stipends, housing, cost of living, and recruiting competition vary in a system this large.

Thank you for allowing the USM to share these concerns regarding Senate Bill 658.