

7 February 2021

## **House Bill 894 – Education – Community Colleges – Collective Bargaining**

### **SUPPORT**

Dear Appropriations Committee:

For the past twenty-four years, I have been a full-time associate professor of English at a Maryland community college, and for the past few years, an adjunct at a second Maryland community college. **As a long-time community college educator, I support bill HB894 – Education – Community Colleges – Collective Bargaining.** Prior to my employment at my current community college, I was employed at a New Jersey community college where I was a member of a union. As a member of the only constituency specifically excluded in the state of Maryland from engaging in collective bargaining, I deserve the same rights as any other group to decide for myself whether I wish to be represented by a union. This is a fundamental right that over 200,000 other public sector workers enjoy, and community college educators, especially those who are part-time and easily exploited, should not be denied this basic right.

I learned the benefits of union representation when the New Jersey college with which I was employed eliminated my position without following appropriate procedures. With the assistance of the union, my position was reinstated. There are so many aspects of being a community college professor that are open to exploitation, not the least of which is workload, which for me has gradually and steadily increased since I began teaching. However, my take-home pay is the same today as it was in 2005. Every year I have added overload teaching and even taken a second (part-time/adjunct) position at another local community college just to continue to make ends meet. With that said, I am one of the lucky ones. Many of my exceptional colleagues do not share the job security of a full-time position. And the transition to remote instruction due to the COVID-19 pandemic has given rise to issues faculty have not had to face in the past, including engaging in unreimbursed professional development as well as the uncertainty of what requirements we may face as we are required to return to campus.

Having the right to collectively bargaining will enable us to negotiate beyond simply increased compensation. It will enable us to do what we have been hired to do—what we are passionate about doing—providing students with the best possible education that will propel them toward success. We must be ensured what many take for granted—job security (particularly for adjuncts who may or may not be hired each semester), the ability to work according to health needs (for instance, not being forced to choose between in-person teaching and leaving a job due to possible COVID exposure), the ability to participate more fully in shared governance, and to collaboratively create appropriate evaluation plans as well as the choice to maintain a tenure system. Faculty are the soul of the institution; with the ability to collectively bargain, we can continue to serve our students and our communities.

I am confident that this is the year for this legislation to pass. Faculty deserve voice, and that can be accomplished by passing this legislation, which is vitally necessary to keep Maryland's Community Colleges preparing the future citizens and leaders of this great state. **I ask you to vote yes on HB 894 and strongly urge a favorable committee report.**