

February 6, 2021

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

Dear Members of the Appropriations Committee:

My name is Eric Stull, and I live in the city of Baltimore. I am an adjunct professor at both Anne Arundel Community College and Bowie State University. I support bill HB894 to extend collective bargaining rights to faculty at Maryland's community colleges. We deserve this most basic right to decide for ourselves whether we want to be represented by a union, a right so fundamental that over 200,000 other public-sector workers already enjoy it. Teachers and others who work at community colleges should never be denied such a basic right.

The COVID-19 pandemic has accentuated the manifold absurdity of being an adjunct professor in Maryland. Last summer, I had to wait six weeks to receive unemployment benefits and had to enlist the help of a state senator to get them, which I finally did only at the end of the summer when it was time to begin preparing for the fall term. As the fall semester's start date was closing in, I ended up having to purchase my own Zoom account to cut through the bureaucracies of two public institutions, and indeed, simply to deal with the difficulty of *having to teach* at two institutions to make ends meet. I wanted to use the same electronic platform to teach at both, but special permission was required from the dean at one school in order to use Zoom through the college, because only a small number of licenses had been purchased; at the other school, despite filling out twenty pages of paperwork almost two weeks before classes started, I still didn't have access to the university's learning-resource management system until the Friday before classes started, and even then access was limited. In effect, I had to buy a Zoom subscription so that I could *supply my own classroom* for my students. At the latter school, I was paid only twice during the semester, which meant I had to wait almost two months to receive any income, with four kids to feed. I could go on in this vein for many, many pages – I could easily fill a book -- describing the inane institutional dysfunction that I have observed while teaching close to 2,000 students over more than fourteen years at four public institutions in Maryland, two community colleges and two USM schools.

To say that it is utterly self-defeating for any system of education to mistreat its own teachers is a little like saying that any attempt to improve my physiognomy by cutting off my nose is likely to undercut its own purpose. Collective bargaining would give those who teach a say over the terms of our own work: it would give us more stability in our departments, more standing on the curricula that adjuncts (more than anyone else) teach, more ability to offer the robust talents which the current institutional strait-jacketing crimps, cramps, and constrains. The power to negotiate the terms of our work will help us do our work better, which will help students learn more and do better. Improving the lot of people who work improves the work those people do. The health and housing insecurities, and sundry other forms of material marginality that adjunct work constantly imposes on many adjuncts, despite the daily heroics those same people perform to overcome them, are terrible for our schools, which will eventually crumble under the weight of these iniquitous inequities if something isn't done about them. It ought to be obvious that this is profoundly dangerous for democracy. Please do something about these things now while you can.

I ask you to vote YES on HB 894, and I strongly urge a favorable committee report.
Respectfully,

Eric Stull