

02/08/2021

House Bill 894 – Education – Community Colleges – Collective Bargaining

SUPPORT Dear members of the Appropriations Committee:

My name is Dr. Daniel Collins-Cavanaugh, Professor of Philosophy at Prince George's Community College. I am a full-time, tenured member of the faculty. I am writing to you in order to share my testimony in support of bill HB 894 – Education – Community Colleges – Collective Bargaining. I believe that all college faculty – full-time and adjunct, deserve the right to decide for ourselves whether or not to be represented by a union. This is a fundamental right that over 200,000 other public sector workers enjoy. It is a right I grew up with (my father was a member of the Association of Pennsylvania State College and University Faculty). Community college faculty, and all other community college employees, should have this same basic right. It should be denied them no more.

People join college faculties for a variety of reasons. For many of us, it is a calling. For all of us, it is a commitment to serve the higher education needs of the community. We want to be active and full partners with college administrations and the community at large so that we can bring our diverse expertise to the table and help move this state's educational needs forward. We want authorship and autonomy in our classrooms, because that is how real innovation gets done. We want security in our course assignments and equity across colleges in the allocation of resources. This is necessary to create a safe and stable learning environment. When people feel insecure in their employment and devalued in their position – especially a position that typically requires at least a Master's Degree as a minimum credential – it creates an atmosphere of instability which impacts students in their learning. It disincentivizes people from entering the field. It reduces college teaching to a gig. It should be a sought-after profession.

I would like to see faculty have the right to explicit and enforceable due process. I would like to see faculty have the right to objective mediation of disputes. I would like to see faculty have the right to meaningful and actionable participation in every aspect of academic life on campus. I would like to see adjunct faculty have the right to security in their positions. I would like to see all faculty have the right to meet with students in safe and professional circumstances. I believe that having a union will make faculty work harder, because they will feel secure in their positions and know that they have the solidarity of their colleagues and the law behind them when needed. I believe we want to be full partners – and for this, we need a union. When I see how our colleagues at Montgomery College work with their administrators to meet the challenges of today, I know that a union means partnership. I would rather work harder as a full, unionized partner, than to work less hard, but with fewer workplace rights.

In order to move the education needs of this state forward, in order to meet the twin challenges of educating through and after this pandemic and addressing systemic inequality, we need to have real workplace rights. One cannot educate students in the direction of a just society if one is denied justice in the very workplace which is supposed to deliver that education.

This is the year we finally pass collective bargaining rights for Maryland Community College employees! We can't wait any longer! We need strong, unified faculty to keep our community colleges running safely. More than that, with the importance of a college degree increasing every year, we need to make sure that our community colleges – the best option for so many of Maryland's students and their families – are strong and vibrant engines for economic and social improvement.

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

In Solidarity,
Daniel Collins
Adjunct Professor