

02/08/2021

House Bill 894 – Education – Community Colleges – Collective Bargaining

SUPPORT

Dear Members of the Appropriations Committee:

My name is Linda Paez. I have been teaching as an adjunct professor at Anne Arundel Community College for the past 15 years. I support Bill HB894-Education Community Colleges Collective Bargaining. I deserve the right to decide for myself whether or not to be represented by a union. This is a fundamental right that over 200,000 other public sector workers enjoy, and so should I.

Having the right to collectively bargain would help not only me and my colleagues but also our students. COVID-19 has negatively affected my ability to teach Spanish effectively. Memorizing vocabulary and verb endings does not make a student bilingual. Zoom classes necessitated by the pandemic are at best a sterile environment for language learning. In-person classes allow students to hear clearly giving them the ability to perfect accents and absorb nuances of culture for effective expression.

Not having a voice on committees which establish working conditions has left adjuncts no ability to change them which, for example, permit last minute class assignments or cancellations. A class cancelled the day before it is to start doesn't allow a student to register for another one thus sabotaging their plan to earn credits toward graduation in a timely manner, not to mention the fact that the professor has put in hours of unpaid time to prepare that class. Shared governance is a must for both professors and students. Without collective bargaining adjunct professors have no recourse to have a voice in correcting poor administrative decisions made by people who are not in the classroom.

Due to COVID, administrators have had to make tough, necessary decisions about how to assign virtual classes as well as train professors to use the technology. Adjunct professors were not included in these decisions that affect our work life because we do not have a seat at the table. We need a seat at the table.

We live in a different world now, and not just due to COVID. Pre-pandemic, adjuncts are the majority of faculty at AACC, making up 70-85% of all teaching professors in any given semester. Adjuncts are no longer the people who come in at night to teach a class or two after their full-time day job. Adjunct professors are the principal workforce at community colleges. This is my full-time job, and this legislation will finally allow me and my colleagues a voice in matters that affect not only our current work, but our students' future return to campus and our community's recovery from the pandemic.

Too many years have already been lost to improve students' and professors' academic lives. We need collective bargaining now more than ever.

I ask you to vote yes on HB894 and strongly urge a favorable committee report.

In unity,

Adjunct Professor Linda Paez