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Position: FAV

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

SB 521
Supporting

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

I write in support of SB 521, 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
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anmol.pdf

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Position: FAV

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

SB 521
Supporting

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

I think, graduate assistants are the backbone of the University academic system. They have many prescribed and subtle duties. They are morally, physically and mentally committed to the academic system. I think, depending on their work, the payment they are getting is not really appreciable. I hereby, support this petition that GAs should get appreciable amount of money to get financial satisfaction to get their job done efficiently.

Sincerely,

Anmol
Teaching Assistant, ANSC
University of Maryland, College Park
4324 Rowalt drive, Collegepark, Maryland 20740

anonymous.pdf

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Position: FAV

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

SB 521
Supporting

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

I think graduate assistants are underpaid in a way that they have large burden of works but still not enough resources to live a good life. Therefore, an increase in payscale would help the graduate assistants improve their quality of life and hence their academic performance.

Sincerely,

Anonymous
Graduate Assistant
University of Maryland, College Park
3409 tulane drive, hyatsville, MARYLAND 20783
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kathryn.pdf

Uploaded by: --, Kathryn

Position: FAV

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

SB 521
Supporting

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

Providing more financial support can only help our teaching and studying, as low finances often puts unnecessary and undeserved stress on graduate students / TAs during a time which is meant to be focused on schooling.

Sincerely,

Kathryn
Graduate Student, Department of English
University of Maryland, College Park
10107 Baltimore Avenue apt 4209, College Park , Maryland 20740
Kateykaroly@gmail.com

syed.neyaz.ahmed.pdf

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Position: FAV

Delores G. Kelley, Chair
Brian J. Feldman, Vice Chair
3 East Miller Senate Office Building
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SB 521
Supporting

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

Graduate Assistants end up working far more than 20+ hours because it takes much longer time to grade assignments and examinations. Too many students enrolled in a semester. A few GAs are hired. The semester span is the same. The deadline for completing the grading of assignments and exams is compressed / expedited. Implies, working long hours (more than 20+) to finish grading assignments and exams quickly.

Sincerely,

Syed Neyaz Ahmed

11661 Stoneview Square, Reston, Virginia 20191

lindsey.allen.pdf

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Position: FAV

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

SB 521
Supporting

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

I am writing this letter to urge you to support SB521.

As a first year student and graduate assistant, I support this bill because collective bargaining will begin to address the egregious gap between our stipends and the cost of living within the DC metro area. As a middle school educator, I am apt at making a budget stretch, but our current employment system is not sustainable. I chose the University of Maryland to begin to envision a world for my students, but I cannot focus on my studies if I have to focus on surviving in this area.

Maryland would join some of the top-ranking universities who have established the right of collective bargaining for student workers. I call upon your sense of justice and equity to support SB 521.

Sincerely,

Lindsey Allen
PhD Student, Applied Linguistics and Language Education,
Graduate Assistant
2311 Benjamin Building
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Position: FAV

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

SB 521
Supporting

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

I am writing to express my support for the passage of SB521, which would grant collective bargaining rights to graduate students at the University of Maryland. 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 provided research assistance in a major project designed to improve the way that librarians help patrons protect their privacy when using public computers. This is a project that has far-reaching implications, and will be able to help many people in protecting their online privacy, a topic that is of the utmost importance right now. My fellow graduate students and I all work on projects that will have a serious and lasting impact on our society. Knowing the weight of this, we strive to put in the hours necessary to complete these projects on time, often needing to work more hours than we are compensated for. The compensation for our work is not even enough to pay our bills; I am lucky to have a spouse with a government job, but if I was not in this position I can say without a doubt I would not be able to afford to be a doctoral student. No single person can live off of \$20,000 a year; if one is lucky enough to find an apartment for \$1,200 per month, that leaves \$5,600 a year to live off of. Those of us that have tuition remission are still required to pay fees, so that's another thousand dollars gone. Who can live off \$4,600 per year? That money must cover food, a phone bill, utilities, books for school, and various other expenses. This is impossible.

The University of Maryland gets nearly \$600 million dollars in research funding in a given year. It is exploitative to pay graduate students less than a living wage. It is unjust to expect students to live off these stipends without recourse, not having the ability to advocate for higher wages. Without collective bargaining rights, it is nearly impossible for GAs to get what they need from the university in order to create a safe and healthy working environment. I vehemently believe that the right to unionize would create an avenue for GAAC to advocate for the needs of GAs much more effectively and successfully.

Sincerely,

S. Nisa Asgarali-Hoffman
Graduate Assistant
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joanna.avery.pdf

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Position: FAV

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

SB 521
Supporting

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

Because of the pandemic, the professor hiring me as a Graduate Assistant brought my work down to half-time. This was not based on my performance. In fact, he wants to keep me in his employment as long as possible, but because of a lack of funding, I was demoted. Now, I'm expected to live off of \$400 every two weeks. This doesn't cover rent, let alone food, school expenses, or mental health assistance. Additionally, the removal of opportunities for employment for graduate students allows me no other option than to stay in a job in which I don't make enough money to cover basic needs.

My employer reached out to the university to see if they could help fund half of my GA salary so that I could stay on full time. Of course, they said no. The lack of care toward students is unheard of. We already are having to deal with classes that cost the same as before the pandemic with a decrease in educational value. Collective bargaining rights could help students like me keep the employment we deserve during such a trying time.

Thankfully, I've been fortunate. Others aren't even employed because the university has essentially removed any sources of funding available before the pandemic. If we can group together and get taken seriously as a group of necessary employees for the university, maybe we can change testimonies like mine.

Sincerely,

Joanna Avery
Graduate Assistant
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Position: FAV

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

SB 521
Supporting

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

I write today respectfully urging you to support SB 521. I am a second-year PhD student in the College of Information Studies, making around \$22,972 for 9.5 months out of the year, which is about \$1,744/month during my appointment after taxes and fees (not including around \$800 of university fees per semester). This is below the estimated annual cost of living for the region, and well below a decent and dignified living wage. That said, I make more than many of my colleagues in different departments and colleges, believe it or not, and I do not currently have dependents to support and look after, like many of us who are also parents.

There are many reasons why I support this bill. First, it has been 20 years since the 2001 legislation banning our right to collectively bargain, and many attempts have been organized since that time. The meet-and-confer process that was established in lieu of the basic democratic right of all employees in the US does not work. Issues such as unlivable wages, unregulated hours, lack of childcare, unclear job expectations, insufficient grievance procedures, workplace abuse, harassment, and exploitation, disproportionate rates of mental health issues, and the lack of other basic workplace protections and support systems still persist. The administration has not been responsive to these issues, and the way to remedy this is to grant us the legal protections and rights that other employees get.

Furthermore, the lack of livable wages, workplace stability and protections, collective bargaining rights, and graduate unionization not only affects our ability to teach, learn, and research, but it also affects the entire institution and UMD mission. It negatively affects the educational experience of undergraduates at UMD, our competitive rank with other universities who are unionized, like University of Michigan, and the ability to recruit new talent. I often get asked by prospective PhDs about stipends and unionization, and it's clear from decades of research that stronger employee rights, higher wages, collective bargaining, and GA unionization supports better teaching and research outcomes.

Stability is key for any individual and group to perform, and employment rights that provide a livable wage, accessible and equitable benefits, and legal representation and bargaining power is crucial for GAs to feel stable, supported, valued, and able to conduct their work. Especially during this time of financial and political stress, democratic and labor rights are crucial. I love this university, the work that I do, and my colleagues and professors, and I want all of us to succeed and live safe, secure, and dignified lives. As someone whose work is dedicated to social, racial, and political justice—studying social, ethical, and political dimensions of

technology innovation and society—I honestly believe that this bill is a step in the right direction. So I thank you for considering this bill, and I urge lawmakers to support this bill that would give GAs a voice in creating a dignified, equitable, and supportive workplace and living conditions for all GAs.

Sincerely,

Nate Beard
PhD Student, iSchool
Research Assistant, GAAC Representative
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kyle.bickoff.pdf

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Position: FAV

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

SB 521
Supporting

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

UMD has for many years taken advantage of graduate students, paying them below a living wage. My wage is so low (about \$19k), as a DC resident and UMD student I have lived below the poverty line (of about \$26k). Unlike UMD, DC has recognized the precarious and dangerous position my employer (UMD) has put me in, and has forced the taxpayers and others to pick up UMD's slack in the form of Medicaid and Food Stamps. UMD recognizes neither my health nor my right to eat nor to pursue my studies without an empty stomach. Such a situation is not only irresponsible on UMD's part, but offensive--my labor is valued so low as to be paid measurably beneath the poverty line. Recognize our labor! Recognize us as human beings! Let us afford to eat!

Sincerely,

Kyle Bickoff
Graduate Assistant
University of Maryland, College Park
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Delores G. Kelley, Chair
Brian J. Feldman, Vice Chair
3 East Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

SB 521
Supporting

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

I am writing to you in hopes that you will consider voting in favor of legalizing collective bargaining rights for graduate students.

Three years ago, I applied to UMD's computer science PhD program at the recommendation of two of my undergraduate professors, both of whom had completed their PhD at UMD. They spoke very highly of the faculty, students, and staff; however, they also warned me that it was challenging to live on the student stipend.

Now, when prospective PhD students or faculty candidates ask me about my experience at UMD, I understand how my undergraduate professors felt. I love the people I work with, and the work I do, but our graduate student stipends are lower than many peer institutions, especially relative to the area's cost of living. During my first year, finding housing within my budget was a significant source of stress. When I discovered issues like bugs, mold, and mice in the house where I rented a room, I was unable to find an alternative I could afford. (Thankfully my circumstances have changed -- I now have additional income on top of my stipend, and I split living costs with a partner.) That experience made it difficult for me to earnestly recommend UMD to prospective students. I spoke with one faculty candidate who was concerned that our low stipends would impact their ability to recruit students. This candidate received an offer from UMD, but they ultimately went to another university.

My experience is just one point of data in a much bigger picture, but that's exactly why collective bargaining rights are so important. Legalizing collective bargaining rights for graduate students will allow us to "connect the dots" -- bringing together graduate students, administrators, and lawmakers so we can understand the bigger picture, and how to move forward.

Sincerely,

Erica R. Blum
PhD Student, Computer Science
Research Assistant and Teaching Assistant
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Delores G. Kelley, Chair
Brian J. Feldman, Vice Chair
3 East Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

SB 521
Supporting

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

I am writing in support of SB 521 Graduate Assistant Collective Bargaining Fairness Act. Last semester, I had the opportunity to serve as a teaching assistant for the first time. I am very passionate about education and I'm glad I had the opportunity to share ideas and knowledge with inquisitive students. However, this experience greatly strengthened my belief that graduate students have earned the right to collectively bargain for adequate compensation and benefits. While the work of a graduate assistant is very intellectually and emotionally rewarding, the increasing cost of living in the state of Maryland and the declining job prospects throughout academia (and the labor market as a whole) have left many students in a very vulnerable economic position. Unfortunately, a passion for education cannot pay bills. The financial benefits provided by graduate assistantships are not commensurate with the time commitment and effort that these jobs require. Therefore, graduate student should be granted the right to negotiate for compensation that is proportional to the value of our work.

It is easy to imagine – as I did before I became a teaching assistant – that graduate assistantships are simply “a part of our training” and are mutually beneficial to the student and the university. However, I've come to realize that many graduate assistants are in a position where they must actively sacrifice their academic progress to fulfill the requirements of their assistantships. It is not unusual for teaching assistants to spend hours crafting lessons, familiarizing themselves with course materials, grading assignments, and answering questions from students. In some cases, teaching assistants are effectively asked to design entire courses – picking readings, establishing assignments and grading scales, etc. It is not unusual for students to write in our anonymous course feedback surveys that they learned as much or more from a teaching assistant as they did from the professor. I say this not to denigrate professors (they delegate these teaching responsibilities in order to free up time for important research), but to emphasize the fact that the work graduate students do is essential to the functioning of the university.

Considering the significance of the work we do, I believe that graduate students should be granted the right to collectively bargain like other university and state employees. I hope you will consider my testimony and others as you deliberate on this issue. Thank you very much for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Brice Bowrey
PhD, Department of History, UMCP
Teaching Assistant

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

SB 521
Supporting

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

Together with President Pines and others I celebrate the high position our university (joint with UMB) achieved in the research spending rating. However, it's striking for me that Graduate Assistants in the same university earn so little compared to other GA's nationwide. According to GAAC, we have a 5000\$ cost of living deficit. I am on my first year, and I dread my first summer. I'm not allowed to search for additional funding because of comprehensive examinations. I doubt that COVID situation will be good enough for me to return home. I don't think I will be able to save enough money from my current stipend, and my visa doesn't allow me to work besides my TA-ship. My parents are not poor, but they live in another country, and their wages are below poverty threshold when translated to USD. I came to the US with the hope that I can survive on my own, but I don't see much opportunities as of now. I believe collective bargaining will allow me and other Graduate Assistants to get out of such dead-end situations and find a solution together with our university.

Sincerely,

Arseniy Braslavskiy
Graduate Assistant
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rebecca.cawthorne.pdf

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

SB 521
Supporting

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

I can confidently and unequivocally say that if I had to rely only on the salary which I receive from the University of Maryland as a Graduate Assistant, I would not be able to buy enough food, pay my rent, or pay for health insurance. The fact that I am able to do these things is in thanks ONLY to the fact that I have a savings account and my parents continue to support me. The fact that I am able to survive by overdrawing from my checking account and being forced to pull from my savings account to buy groceries is thanks to prior years of saving money before I arrived to Maryland. Simply said, I would not be able to survive off of the salary I currently receive. This is due partly to the extremely high cost of living here around the DC area, and the state taxes here in Maryland. My salary is already comically low, the high amount of taxes taken out of my salary is further insult to injury. Consequently, the extreme differences in the salaries received by students is endlessly frustrating. Why, I ask my self routinely, does someone receive \$5,000 a year more than me when we have the same job but work for different departments. My financial situation, as I watch my savings account dwindle every month as I approach complete financial disaster, has brought sleepless nights and extreme anxiety. Additionally, I am unable to move to a cheaper area or move back in with my parents due to the fact that my boss requires that I personally come into work even during the ongoing pandemic. Altogether, I beg that lawmakers work with representatives from the University to support the future educators, scientists, researchers, and leaders of America earn a living wage as we fight (quite literally) to survive.

Sincerely,

Rebecca Cawthorne
Graduate Assistant, English Department, Physics Department
University of Maryland, College Park
3300 East West Highway, Hyattsville, MD 20782
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joshua.chiel.pdf

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Position: FAV

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

SB 521
Supporting

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

The argument is simple fairness: the choice to exercise collective bargaining rights provides graduate students the same basic benefits of all other UMD employees. Such rights are standard across numerous state school systems (for example, California, New York, Connecticut, New Mexico, Wisconsin, Michigan, Oregon). Moreover, for non-traditional graduate students, access to benefits such as social security and retirement plans are particularly important as they embark on the multi-year commitment to their advanced degree balanced against the cost to their family and long term finances.

Sincerely,

Joshua Chiel
Teaching Assistant
University of Maryland, College Park
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myriam.cisse.pdf

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Position: FAV

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

SB 521
Supporting

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

I think that Graduate Assistant are doing a lot for the university of Maryland communities (faculties and students). I believe that we should have the right to social security benefits and others thing that we are not granted right now.

Sincerely,

Myriam Cisse
Teaching Assistant
University of Maryland, College Park
3420 toledo terrace, Hyattsville, Maryland 20782

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Position: FAV



JOHN A. OLSZEWSKI, JR.
County Executive

CHARLES R. CONNER III, ESQ.
Director of Government Affairs

JOEL N. BELLER
Deputy Director of Government Affairs

BILL NO.: **SB 521**

TITLE: State Personnel – Collective Bargaining

SPONSOR: Senator Kramer

COMMITTEE: Finance

POSITION: **SUPPORT**

DATE: February 18, 2021

Baltimore County **SUPPORTS** Senate Bill 521 – State Personnel – Collective Bargaining. This legislation grants collective bargaining rights to graduate students at a system institution, Morgan State University, or St. Mary’s College who is in a teaching, administrative, research, or comparable position, including fellows or postdoctoral interns.

Graduate students within UMD and other graduate school systems serve a vital function to the professors and the institutions at large. These students provide support in research, education, administrative functions, and in running the day-to-day operations of schools and programs. It is because of this that many graduate students are uniquely positioned to inform the school system in their capacity not only as students, but as employees.

County Executive Olszewski is a staunch supporter of the empowerment of workers through collective bargaining rights. Collective bargaining is vital to employees because it allows them to use their numbers as a means of gaining representation in decisions made by an employer that will have consequences for all workers.

Union input does not only benefit workers, but it also provides crucial information to employers that improve the efficiency, effectiveness, and overall morale of the system. Graduate students who are employed in some capacity by UMD, Morgan State, or St. Mary’s College deserve to have a say in the way the University of Maryland system functions, and these institutions will benefit from their input.

Accordingly, Baltimore County requests a **FAVORABLE** report on SB 521. For more information, please contact Chuck Conner, Director of Government Affairs, at cconner@baltimorecountymd.gov.

SB 521 - State Personnel - Collective Bargaining.p

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Position: FAV



MARYLAND STATE & D.C. AFL-CIO

AFFILIATED WITH NATIONAL AFL-CIO

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President

Donna S. Edwards

Secretary-Treasurer

Gerald W. Jackson

SB 521 – State Personnel – Collective Bargaining Senate Finance Committee February 18, 2021

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 of SB 521 – State Personnel – Collective Bargaining. My name is Donna S. Edwards, and I am the President of the Maryland State and District of Columbia AFL-CIO. On behalf of the 340,000 union members, I offer the following comments.

Currently, the University of Maryland system considers Graduate Assistants (GA) as students, not workers. This 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 graduate assistants is not new, unique, or different. Currently, 30 universities, including the University of Wisconsin, University of Michigan, University of Illinois, and the University of California at Berkley 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.

In a recent Executive Order, President Biden reaffirmed the position of the United States on collective bargaining rights by stating “*It is also the policy of the United States to encourage*

union organizing and collective bargaining."¹ We believe that the State of Maryland should follow the lead of the United States and do the same. SB 521 is an affirmation of our values to encourage and empower workers to decide their own fate, and not be tied solely to the decisions of the employers.

It is time to give Graduate Assistants the right to collectively bargain for themselves, and **for these reasons, we urge a favorable vote on SB 521.**

¹ <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2021/01/22/executive-order-protecting-the-federal-workforce/>

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Position: FAV

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

SB 521
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 SB 521. 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 for 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 a vital part of the success of the university, and even its faculty. We are at the core of this symbiotic relationship that produces top-notch research. Even when our administration repeatedly attempts to ignore our concerns and needs, students never cease in their efforts.

Current wages are heavily dependent on the individual 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 back to the university in fees. This yields a negative balance at the end of the year. Personally, my year closed with a negative balance of \$2000 despite my thriftiness. 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 Assistants.

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 2-3 jobs; that is 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 over the summer leave students forlorn, incapable of making a living wage. 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 benefit from distracted employees?

Being able to bargain our own wages would allow for an open dialog with the university, and for students to regain the power and respect other employees enjoy. 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 (e.g., 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
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maria.e.cramer.pdf

Uploaded by: Cramer, Maria E.

Position: FAV

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

SB 521
Supporting

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

I'm writing in support of SB 521 Graduate Assistant Collective Bargaining Fairness Act. I am lucky to be a PhD student in Entomology, in a department and lab that generally value my mental health, ability to maintain work-life balance, and ability to support myself during my studies. Having this kind of support lets me focus on my work instead of being worried about whether I'll have time to do it all or whether I'll have enough money to support myself. It lets me take joy in my research and classes. I can see the impact of our typically good working conditions in my fellow graduate students, and it's been backed up yearly by surveys where Entomology has some of the highest satisfaction evaluations of all departments.

But the thing is, this really is just luck. I know that these supportive working conditions aren't true for all graduate students at the University of Maryland. Without the ability to collectively bargain, our individual circumstances are left up to luck in having progressive PIs and department heads. This means that so many graduate students are dealing with the arduous and exploitative dynamics widespread in academia. These conditions don't make for better teachers and researchers. They make it hard for us to flourish and do good work.

Writing from the perspective of a healthy working environment, I firmly believe that allowing collective bargaining, allowing graduate students to negotiate for healthy working conditions, is win-win for UMD and for graduate students. When we can achieve the fair working conditions that all people deserve, we will flourish.

Sincerely,

Maria E. Cramer
PhD Student, Department of Entomology, CMNS
Research Assistant
4005 New Hampshire Ave NW
Washington DC 20011
mec@umd.edu

sabrina.m.curtis.pdf

Uploaded by: Curtis, Sabrina M.

Position: FAV

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

SB 521
Supporting

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

I am currently a bi-national Ph.D. student in Materials Science and Engineering at the University of Maryland (USA) and at Kiel University (Germany). I am also a National Science Foundation Graduate Fellow as well as a Clark Fellow. I have been an active member of the A. James Clark School of Engineering since 2013. In undergraduate, I served in many prior student leadership roles including Clark Engineering Student Ambassador, and Vice President for the undergraduate Materials Science Student Society. Since I have been in graduate school, I have directly supervised various interdisciplinary research projects for 10 undergraduate students, and five master's students.

I am writing this letter to implore you to make vital reformations to the graduate school program at the University of Maryland, College Park. I will outline the most urgent concerns of UMD graduate students, provide methods for rectifying concerns, and highlight the profound benefits the university will incur if changes are made. I thank you in advance for your serious consideration of this testimonial.

In virtually all cases, UMD graduate students receive a salary that is insufficient to satisfy their cost of living and basic necessities. This places students under undue financial strain, with no good option for remedy. If students work a second or even third job to accommodate their financial needs, it will redirect substantial amounts of time away from essential research functions they provide to the university. If students focus entirely on their academic duties, the financial strain of living paycheck to paycheck will drastically lower their ability to make productive contributions to the university. This is in addition to the myriad of devastating physical and mental health effects that chronic stress exerts on the body and mind. Simply increasing the salaries of graduate students would alleviate a major cause of stress, redoubling motivation and productivity instantly.

UMD graduate students also suffer from a lack of standardized health benefits. Each department provides disparate insurance plans, with the commonality across the board being low quality. If a student were to develop an acute problem, they cannot be assured they will receive proper care. If a student has a chronic health concern, they cannot be assured they will be able to afford their medication. Even a perfectly healthy student lives with the constant underlying concern that they are underinsured. With the massive expectations placed on graduate students, they can hardly afford to be getting sick in the first place. Providing all UMD graduate students with the same standardized options for quality health insurance would give peace of mind to these concerns.

Graduate students at Maryland are greatly overworked. I have seen regular examples of my colleagues feeling compelled to work 12+ hour days, staying in the lab until midnight and quite frequently work on weekends and holidays. Even if the students were being properly compensated for their huge amounts of overtime, which they are not, such a work schedule is completely unsustainable. Consistently working long hours drains the morale of students,

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causing sleep deprivation and mental health concerns such as depression and anxiety. It is apparent in many cases that Ph.D. advisors place heavy burdens on students so that they may achieve goals that are in their own best interest as professors competing for funding, publication, and prestige. This culture of servitude rather than mentorship and growth is an unethical philosophy. Research science is a discipline that should be focused on progress over large periods of time that contribute to society. There is no reason to exhibit a false sense of urgency that places students under a high level of duress. Students should not be made to work excessively without proper compensation. Either they should be compensated, or hours should be reduced.

Finally, UMD graduated students need the right to unionize and engage in collective bargaining. Without the ability to come together in solidarity, students have no chance to negotiate better terms of employment for themselves. Students feel a sense of learned helplessness; either they must bend to the will of their advisors and the university graduate program at large, or they face the prospect of being removed from their Ph.D. program. The underlying threat of removal from the program, in the absence of the ability to unionize, perpetuates poor conditions of employment for dedicated students. Granting graduate students the right to unionize and negotiate with their superiors is a basic liberty that would bring to light unethical practices.

I would like to conclude my letter by addressing the profound benefits the University of Maryland will enjoy, should these reformations be instituted. First, retention will improve. With students feeling happier and more secure in their livelihood, more of them will see their Ph.D. to its completion. Second, acquisition will improve. With the newly minted graduate students salaries, benefits, and rights, more prospective graduate students are likely to choose UMD for their Ph.D. programs. Third, the university's reputation will improve. UMD will gain prestige as a research institution, increasing the amount and magnitude of government funding and other grants. Last, UMD's graduate program will have a larger societal impact. UMD will gain ethos as an institution that demonstrably contributes to scientific progress, the ultimate goal.

We are aware that these are not small requests, and we greatly appreciate your consideration of the aforementioned reformations presented in this letter.

Very respectfully,

Sabrina Curtis, M.Sc.

Binational Doctoral Candidate Materials Science and Engineering:
University of Maryland, College Park, USA and Kiel University, Kiel, Germany

National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellow (2018 – present)

A. James Clark School of Engineering Fellow (2020 – present)

Former Treasurer of Materials Science and Engineering Graduate Student Society (2017 - 2018)

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Former Vice President of the Undergraduate Materials Science Student Society (2016 – 2017)
Former A. James Clark School of Engineering Student Ambassador (2016 – 2017)

4418 Stadium Drive
College Park, MD 20742
scurtis@terpmail.umd.edu

sai.kanth.dacha.pdf

Uploaded by: Dacha, Sai Kanth

Position: FAV

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

SB 521
Supporting

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

My name is Sai Kanth, I am a Ph.D. Candidate in Physics at the University of Maryland. Nearly four and a half years ago, I graduated from the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Madras, and I accepted an admission offer from the University of Maryland's highly reputed Department of Physics.

I came here knowing that I was far from being the first student from the best university in India to come to UMD for graduate school, and I will leave from here knowing that I am far from being the last one. At UMD, I have interacted with some of the best talent from across the globe. Although most of us are incredibly grateful for the research opportunities that UMD has provided us, we cannot help but be concerned about the lack of sufficient financial support for graduate students, and thereby a general disregard for our mental health and wellbeing.

Among all of the Big 10 schools, UMD pays its graduate assistants the least, relative to local cost of living. Given the incredibly expensive area that the DC Metro Area is, it is very difficult to manage a healthy living on our current stipend levels. Unless one lives right next to campus and doesn't need a car, has no medical expenses, has no student or other loans, spends very little on food, has plenty of family financial support, and has no other financial obligations or difficulties whatsoever, it is extremely difficult for one to not let financial distress affect one's mental health, on top of the stress that a Ph.D. already puts on one.

The lack of a sufficiently good public transportation system that works during the winter and summer, and beyond 5/6 PM each day (this is highly relevant given the long hours many of us have to spend in our labs), as well as the lack of affordable food options, puts on many of us an unhealthy amount of stress on a day-to-day basis. Unless one is willing to eat unhealthy fast food, it is essentially impossible to find a place around College Park where one can find a meal at a restaurant for under \$10. For comparison, many Big 10 schools that I've visited are located in lesser expensive areas, and food is relatively much more inexpensive. Not to mention the better pay in comparison to cost of living.

In essence, there is little to no room for error even in the best possible scenario, even with the best personal financial management skills. We are well aware of the fact that we are gaining access to education through this Ph.D., but we strongly believe that we shouldn't have to choose

between paying the bills and putting food on the table every single day.

Every graduate student friend that I have made here at UMD -- Americans and internationals alike -- struggle with this. Many of my American friends have student loans from their undergraduate to clear, and some even have families and kids to tend to. Among my fellow international students, many of us come from countries and families where we do not have much financial support. Doing a Ph.D. in today's fast-changing environment is incredibly difficult as it is, and the last thing that we as graduate students want to deal with is yet another source of stress and difficulty.

As many of my colleagues have said in their excellent testimonials, all that the graduate student body at UMD seeks is the right to bargain for a fair wage. It is a right that other employees of the State of Maryland deservedly possess, and it is one that we believe we deserve too, as the work that we do is incredibly important for the functioning and continuing success of the University System of Maryland.

Although we are paid for 20 hrs/wk during the semester and 40 hrs/wk during the summer, most of us work for far longer than that throughout the year. Last month, for example, my work averaged at around 55 hrs/wk. The fact of the matter is that we put in so much work not just for our own learning and success, but also so that our advisors can secure grants, and so that our department can continue to attract the best students and faculty.

It is my strong belief that a graduate student body that has its concerns truly heard and addressed can produce much better results for the University overall. It is my sincere hope that upon reading these testimonials, you will consider our reasonable request.

Sincerely,

Sai Kanth Dacha
Ph.D. Candidate, Department of Physics
#2140, Kim Engineering Building,
8228 Paint Branch Drive, University of Maryland
College Park, MD 20742.
Email: saikanth.dacha@gmail.com

robert.dalka.pdf

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 521
Supporting

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

I urge you to support SB 521, and to reverse the ban on collective bargaining rights for graduate students at all schools in the University of Maryland system.

In this past year I saw the damage that COVID-19 has caused to many of my fellow graduate students, and specifically how the lack of collective bargaining rights contributed to their strife. I have always supported the efforts to grant these rights to graduate students. Last year I wrote testimony to the Assembly outlining the multiple ways in which graduate students at the University of Maryland, College Park are vulnerable to be taken advantage of in their positions and how graduate students at other Big Ten universities have protections in place that we do not.

My concerns were brought to realization when COVID-19 caused catastrophic cuts to the university system. In our offer letters from our department, graduate students are guaranteed 2 full years of a Teaching Assistantship before they are required to move to a Research Assistantship. However, over the course of last summer, the Associate Chair of Graduate Education in our department began threatening first and second year students with the possibility of cutting their Teaching Assistantships. This was an effort to force students in Research Assistantships and free up departmental funds. Graduate students in my department, including myself, had to work tirelessly to push back on our department's attempts to coerce students by threatening to take away what was promised in their offer letters.

Graduate students are professionals and are the essential workers of the higher education system and university research enterprise. We are the ones that keep undergraduate courses running, even during a pandemic. Without our work, the university system would fall apart. We deserve to have the promises made to us kept. And we deserve to have stability in our employment, especially during a pandemic. This will only be ensured through securing our rights to collectively bargain.

Sincerely,

Robert Paul Dalka
PhD, Department of Physics
Research Assistant
1531 W Falkland Ln, Apt 240,
Silver Spring MD 20910

rpalka@umd.edu

melissa.davis.pdf

Uploaded by: Davis, Melissa

Position: FAV

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

SB 521
Supporting

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

The ability for graduate workers to advocate for ourselves through collective bargaining is a fundamental step in improving our working conditions. Graduate workers are essential, as universities increasingly rely on us while tenure positions are being removed. Because positions in our academic fields are disappearing, there has never been a more pertinent time for graduate students to participate in collective bargaining: we do this not only to help preserve our safety, security, and livelihood, but we also do this to help the next generation of graduate students who face an even more challenging future in the world of academia. Collective bargaining would lay the groundwork for the future of academia: if we want to retain talent and ensure high quality university education for the next generation, the right to collective bargaining is not only necessary, but urgent.

Sincerely,

Melissa Davis
Graduate Assistant, Teaching and Learning, Policy and Leadership
University of Maryland, College Park
1349 Kenyon Street NW, Washington, District of Columbia 20010
mdavis39@umd.edu

Final State Testimony Letter SB521.pdf

Uploaded by: Deffenbaugh, Liberty

Position: FAV

Esteemed Maryland Representatives,

Thank you for hearing us today. I am honored to be able to share my experience with you, as a representative of my university and as a Graduate Assistant (GA). I've been a GA for three semesters so far, with 2 remaining before I graduate.

When I applied to be a GA, I was drawn by the promises of a "free education" and doing meaningful work in my department to gain skills towards my studies in Counseling Psychology. The advertised 20 hour workload seemed manageable with my academic schedule and the benefits seemed great. When I started working, I found that this was not the case and it was clear that we either accept the terms or be replaced.

I have experienced late contracts and being reassigned without consultation. My supervisor had to directly intervene when my position and pay rate were changed to being an on campus teaching assistant for freshman, a unilateral decision that was only reversed with solidarity of student workers. The Office of Graduate Studies didn't get enough people to volunteer to teach on campus in the Fall, so they chose GAs to fill those roles without consulting us. Collective bargaining would have given us a voice and protected us from decisions like this.

At my university, we are paid minimum wage and strongly encouraged not to have employment outside of our GA positions. The strain that a full time class load, a part time position, and the requirements of campus involvement are enough to balance, but does not take into account Maryland's high living cost. This financial burden we face is met with suggestions of taking out student loans to cover basic necessities. A single dollar doesn't stretch as far as it used to, but it can mean the difference between a snack to get through the day and an overdraft fee. We aren't asking for a handout, but a fair wage for fair work.

Without collective bargaining, our contracts and rates are decided by persons who look at the bottom line while increasing our fees and tuition each year. While my tuition is covered, it currently takes me over 90 hours of work each semester just to pay for the fees. With a cap of 20 hours a week, this becomes almost 5 weeks of work. If I am sick and unable to work, then I am simply not paid for those hours. Without benefits that cover sick time, leave and bereavement the small stipend we get continues to shrink, furthering our feelings of being expendable.

In a meeting recently, we were scolded for not submitting time cards correctly, although most of the issues were with HR, not anything we have control over. Additionally, we were reminded that we cannot submit more than 20 hours, but if we

want to be “helpful” to our supervisors who “need more help” then we can’t be paid for it. This imbalance of power between us and our supervisors is compounded, as most of our supervisors are our advisors and professors. These are the people who have control over students, grades and how they progress in their respective programs. How much negotiation power do we have without collective bargaining? Even though I gratefully assist someone who respects me and considers my needs, I regularly work more than 20 hours per week, feeling pressure to help my peers succeed at the institution and assist my supervisor throughout their day. These small moments add up quickly, and I now spend most of my time at my computer, attempting to complete my schoolwork and job tasks.

In March 2020, higher learning rushed to adopt virtual learning. This simply could not have happened without the skills of GAs. My work has directly ensured that several classes were able to transition to the online format, with course material being available to students. Professors rely on us to make sure classes run smoothly and sometimes at all. Administrators rely on us to maintain records and keep them informed for meetings. Students rely on us for campus information, program requirements and institution policies. Because of COVID, I now find myself perpetually on call, tracking at least 15 hours per week on meetings alone. Each week, another task outside the scope of my job description is added, including personal technical support and advising students. A person who wears as many hats as we do surely deserves the right to advocate for themselves.

We are asking you to give us the opportunity to collectively bargain, not provide it for us. Supporting this legislation doesn’t even guarantee that each institution will use collective bargaining, but please understand and appreciate our desire to be as independent as possible. We want to be educated citizens, contributing to society with higher education and more stable careers. Please help us achieve these goals by allowing us to properly advocate for ourselves. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Liberty Deffenbaugh', written in a cursive style.

Liberty Deffenbaugh
Bowie State University
Graduate Student Association Vice President and Graduate Assistant

samuel.august.deitemyer.pdf

Uploaded by: Deitemyer, Samuel August

Position: FAV

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

SB 521
Supporting

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

I personally feel very lucky to be part of a fantastic group in a department that pays its graduate students well, however I know this is not the case for all departments. I have many friends who are currently or were previously part of UMD's graduate school and for those who were not in STEM they were paid significantly less for their TA positions. This was an additional hardship for them and grad school. Whether this should or should not be increased is besides the point. As of now the graduate students can not even collectively bargain for higher pay if they believe they deserve it. This is not the case for other similar employees at many universities and as a state institution it seems ridiculous that they would deny their employees so fundamental in this country.

Sincerely,

Samuel August Deitemyer
Research Assistant, PHYS
University of Maryland, College Park
3711 Campus Dr. , College Park, MD 20740
sdeitemyer@gmail.com

will.bien.duggan.pdf

Uploaded by: Duggan, Will Bien

Position: FAV

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

SB 521
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Dear Chair Kelley, Vice Chair Feldman, and Members of the Finance Committee,

I am from the DC area, and before I enrolled I made sure that I had one of the lowest cost living situations possible so I would not be further burdened while in grad school. Despite these precautions, I have had to find supplementary income during the course of my graduate school to be able to maintain my (low) standard of living. I support collective bargaining rights, and cost of living adjustments to respect the necessary conditions for effective scholarship.

Sincerely,

Will Bien Duggan
Graduate Assistant, Department of Urban Studies and Regional Planning
University of Maryland, College Park
3033 16TH ST NW, Washington, DC 20009
willbduggan@gmail.com

alexander.m.dunphy.pdf

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Position: FAV

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

SB 521
Supporting

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

As a PhD candidate in history, my goal has been to explore the countless courageous efforts of everyday people banding together to fight for justice, security, and dignity; to learn the collective strategies that lead to victory; and to extract the lessons from failure.

I have tried to use the lessons this history provides to effect change in my community and on my campus. For the past three and a half years, I have devoted myself to organizing my colleagues to fight for justice, security, and improved working conditions for my fellow graduate workers. As the Student Interest Liaison for the history department I am tasked with acting as a representative to the department on behalf of history graduate students concerning their working conditions; as the chair of the Graduate Assistant Advisory Committee, I act as a representative for all graduate workers and communicate our grievances and concerns to the university administration; as a representative to the Graduate Student Government I mobilized graduate students to push for greater protections and services; and as the President of Fearless Student Employees, I help spearhead the continuing legislative effort to pass a state law recognizing our status as employees entitled to national labor protections.

These roles have put me in a unique position to interact with the larger community of graduate students and hear about the struggles they are facing. Graduate workers are overworked, underpaid, and have little legal protections as workers. We lack medical or family leave, we are vulnerability due to our immigration status, we have no assistance for child care, we are at the whims of abusive supervisors, and we face racial, gender, and sexual discrimination. Graduate workers face a massive power imbalance when dealing with their employers and we lack any legal protections or means of redress because in the state of Maryland, graduate workers at public universities lack the rights afforded to other employees.

The situation has become even more dire in the Covid-19 pandemic. Graduate workers have had their workload increase, lost their assistantships, been forced to work in person without proper precautions, while being denied the vaccine because they are not “employees.”

Beyond the immediate concerns of graduate workers, the Covid-19 pandemic has terrifying implications for academia as a whole. In the past, the treatment of graduate workers was justified as a temporary initiation or “apprenticeship” which would guarantee a secure profession within the academy. However, the promise of a faculty position is increasingly becoming out of reach for many graduate students. The majority of those with humanities PhDs do not end up in academia and only a small fraction of those are able to secure a tenured-track position. The situation has become even more dire in the Covid-19 pandemic. Lost revenue, lower enrollments, and new expenditures have led to state budget cuts which have forced many universities to reduce the number of teaching assistantships, cancel grants and fellowships, and

impose hiring freezes. The full ramifications of this health crisis are still unknown but unless action is taken the result will be an ever-decreasing number of people choosing to pursue graduate degrees and jobs in academia.

The good news is that there is an easy step that will help ameliorate many of these problems: grant graduate workers in Maryland the same rights graduate workers at many public and all private universities already enjoy. The right to collective bargaining would allow us to a seat at the table and force the university to take our needs seriously.

I understand some are concerned about the potential budget implications of this act (especially in light of the pandemic), however, these concerns are unfounded. Collective bargaining is just that: *bargaining*. Just because the university is required to bargain in good faith with us, does not automatically translate into higher salaries for graduate workers. While higher salaries would of course be welcomed, there are a myriad of other benefits that graduate workers is the USM would gain from collective bargaining, that would not impact the budget. Clearer guidelines, contracts, improved grievance procedures, access to the Maryland State Higher Education Labor Relations Board – all of these would do wonders in improving the experience of graduate workers and would cost the state nothing.

Graduate workers are essential workers. Essential during the pandemic, essential to the running of the university system, and essential to a well-functioning society. Graduate students have much to contribute to US policy, economy, culture, and efforts to make a more just society. If we do not foster this kind of knowledge, we are doing our world a disservice. Therefore, I implore you to vote in favor of SB521.

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Dunphy
PhD, Department of History
Teaching Assistant
President, Fearless Student Employees
Chair, The Graduate Assistant Advisory Committee (GAAC)
1304 Saint Paul St. Baltimore, MD 21202
adunphy@umd.edu

sharmila.duppala.pdf

Uploaded by: duppala, Sharmila

Position: FAV

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

SB 521
Supporting

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

I need some more help as a TA at UMD and more appreciation for the work. I wish to have a raise in the pay which makes my life easier especially during summer terms.

Sincerely,

Sharmila duppala
Teaching Assistant, Computer Science
University of Maryland, College Park
Iribe Center, UMD, College Park, Maryland 20740

jaemin.eun.pdf

Uploaded by: Eun, Jaemin

Position: FAV

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

SB 521
Supporting

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

I have been both a GA and an hourly graduate worker (non-GA). When I was a non-GA hourly worker, I did the same amount of work as when I did receive a GA, however, I did not receive any benefits (healthcare), and I was given a much lower overall wage, not to mention that my tuition was not covered. I think it is important for the graduate students to be able to collectively bargain because not all graduate students have the same benefits.

Sincerely,

Jaemin Eun
Department of Geographical Science
University of Maryland, College Park
9106 48th Place, College Park, MD 20740

kwok.lung.fan.pdf

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 521
Supporting

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

I am writing to express my support to SB521. I am a second 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. During COVID, graduate students had suffer both financially and academically. The rent near College Park is extremely high while cost of living significantly increase during COVID19. The lack of Union also make us incapable to bargain with university for safer environment and compensation for online working environment set like high speed internet or devices for teaching and research. 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
Research Assistant, Physics
University of Maryland, College Park
Physical Science Complex, College Park, MD 20740

charlie.fanning.pdf

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 521
Supporting

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

I am writing in support of SB521 the work of teaching and research assistants makes the University of Maryland a top institution of higher learning and ensures that students achieve positive learning outcomes. Nevertheless, 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, particularly in light of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

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. I also take on outside work whenever possible to make ends meet. These deficiencies have been exacerbated by the move to online learning, which has required us to learn new technologies and teaching strategies and keep track of a litany of students' illnesses and life complications.

Before I entered UMD, I worked in two different jobs covered by collective bargaining agreements. These are not radical documents. Rather, they establish rule of law and predictable conditions and outcomes in the workplace. 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 and safety in the workplace, it is shameful that the University of Maryland system would disregard potential issues in the workplace and 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 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 and Doctoral Candidate, History
1151 West Cross St.
Baltimore, MD 21230

karen.feagin.pdf

Uploaded by: Feagin, Karen

Position: FAV

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

SB 521
Supporting

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

I am writing to you to urge you to support SB521 to afford graduate assistants the same rights as employees of any other organization: to organize and to choose to bargain collectively. We are, in deed if not in name, employees, and we deserve the same protections as other classes of employees, which are not guaranteed to us as students.

I consider myself exceedingly fortunate in that I have not had to take on additional work outside of my assistantships during my time as a doctoral student; however, that is due to the fact that my spouse earns substantially more than I do and provides a financial cushion we would not otherwise have. The \$18,000 annual stipend I was offered upon acceptance to the University of Maryland -- the state's flagship campus -- is not enough to live on as an individual adult. Certainly it is not a fair wage for the work I have done and the qualifications I hold, even when factoring in tuition remission and other benefits.

For the past year, I have held an assistantship under the guidance of kind and accommodating supervisors. They have respected my time and studies and have sought to provide me professional development and support. Other graduate students are not as fortunate in their work circumstances, but such differences in our experiences should not be due to chance, the whims of supervisors, or the fact that acting as instructor of record only counts as a "half-time" assistantship, forcing graduate students to choose between their own time and the quality of instruction they provide to other students. We all deserve fair and just wages, respect for our time, and access to hospitable working conditions, which are not guaranteed to us as students but could be guaranteed to employees through negotiation.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Karen Feagin
Ph.D., Department of Teaching and Learning, Policy and Leadership
Graduate Assistant
111 Lee Ave. Takoma Park MD 20912
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Uploaded by: Fetherston, John-Patrick

Position: FAV

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

SB 521
Supporting

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

We Graduate Assistants of the University of Maryland system keep the gears of pedagogy and administration moving, performing valuable labor to impart wisdom, skills, and experience to undergraduate students and to assist administrators with the effective functioning of the department and the school. Teaching Assistants in particular perform the onerous task of maintaining the forward momentum of their own studies while devoting significant portions of their time every week, every month, every semester to providing a valuable learning experience to students, doing the hard work of implementing the academic strategies and imparting the intellectual content constructed and assembled by instructors of record. These efforts unfailingly exceed the maximum average numbers of hours worked (20/week) deemed allowable by Graduate School policies.

Simply put, graduate employees perform vital labor for the University of Maryland and that labor must be recognized and rewarded at a level sufficient to allow for adequate living standards. The university and the state owe us that much for the valuable work we provide to make this current model of instruction function. That we are not treated as other state employees are treated and that budgets seem to put these decisions out of the hands of administrators are problems of political will. These things can be changed if we decide to do so, but our voice in that conversation has been and is limited. We are simply demanding fair representation of our collective political will and power in a negotiation for adequate compensation for our labor. Dismissals of our right to bargain collectively that rely on the 'good sense' of resolving issues on a 'one-on-one' basis reveal that those who make such arguments know precisely how this power dynamic functions and how it serves to maintain the existing state of affairs. We maintain that this is not the case, but our desire to change those affairs cannot find expression without the recognition of the political voice that our labor merits.

Sincerely,

JP Fetherston
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nicholas.galloway.pdf

Uploaded by: Galloway, Nicholas

Position: FAV

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

SB 521
Supporting

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

I would like to express my unconditional support of SB 521 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. The COVID-19 pandemic has also presented new challenges for our relationship with the university, often forcing us to be flexible beyond what would be considered reasonable labor obligations. 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,

Sincerely,

Nicholas Galloway
Teaching Assistant, Department of Anthropology
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pranav.goel.pdf

Uploaded by: Goel, Pranav

Position: FAV

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

SB 521
Supporting

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

I am writing in strong support of collective bargaining rights for graduate employees, and urge you to pass SB 521. This is extremely necessary for all the graduate employees who are at the forefront of novel research, teaching undergraduate and graduate students, and carrying the bulk of administrative duties and logistics ensuring the smooth functioning of their respective departments.

I am a doctoral student and a graduate research assistant. I have also been a graduate teaching assistant helping facilitate learning in both 200-level and 400-level undergraduate courses which are critical to undergraduate education in my department. Me and my fellow graduate employees make significant contributions based on a considerable amount of daily work, but our efforts are often exploited because we lack the necessary power and rights to negotiate for fair compensation and benefits. At the very least, we deserve to have our voices heard and have a functioning seat at the table when it comes to discussing and negotiating our benefits, which often determine our very livelihoods for many years. Our responsibilities also tend to increase with various roles, and unforeseen changes like the recent pandemic means adjustment and addition to our roles, efforts, and contributions. However, without collective bargaining rights, we have no say in how any shifts in responsibilities are accounted for in our pay and benefits. This can lead to devastatingly poor working conditions with no real say in how to get out of such conditions.

Collective bargaining rights will vastly help with graduate employees taking a reasonable measure of control over their working conditions instead of having to rely on the sympathy and good-will of faculty or other administrative employees. A say in the pay, benefits, and other variables that have a large impact on our lives will go a long way in helping improve working conditions and is also really the only fair option. I urge you to support me and all graduate employees by supporting and passing SB 521. To be completely honest, not passing this bill is a big stain on UMD's reputation and potential for future graduate students and employees who may want to bring their talents to our university, but may be deterred by working conditions and especially having little to no say in doing anything about it.

Sincerely,

Pranav Goel
Ph.D. in Computer Science
Research Assistant
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Uploaded by: Goffin, Andrew

Position: FAV

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

SB 521
Supporting

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

As a graduate research assistant in College Park, I find that passing SB521 is essential to the wellbeing of graduate workers across all campuses in the USM.

As a student in the Electrical & Computer Engineering department, I have above average funding, and my advisor allows me to have a good work-life balance. However, even with my current stipend it is difficult to afford living in the DC area. Those with average or below average stipends can find it nearly impossible. This problem only gets worse each year, as the approximately 1% annual cost-of-living increases do not keep up with rent increases, not to mention the increases in other costs. Regardless, stipend and work-life balance are highly dependent on my department, advisor, and campus of study. On an individual level, no graduate student can petition for improvements in their working conditions, especially when such issues vary wildly between departments and campuses. Such improvements can only be attained through collective bargaining.

Of course, even if graduate students decide not to unionize, we should have the ability to decide that for ourselves. We are workers and keep the wheel of academia turning through our research and teaching, and as such should have the freedom to bargain for our rights if we so choose. SB521 is a necessary step to having that freedom, and I sincerely hope that the bill is passed.

Sincerely,

Andrew Goffin
Research Assistant, Electrical and Computer Engineering
University of Maryland, College Park
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[laura.suzanne.gordon.pdf](#)

Uploaded by: Gordon, Laura Suzanne

Position: FAV

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

SB 521
Supporting

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

As a member of PTK faculty at UMD, and formerly as a Grad TA here, I have engaged in numerous, failed efforts to win bargaining rights for PTK and GA employees in this state. We need them because we unprotected, at-will employees.

For example: During Covid, like many others, I have worked many many hours each week over what would be considered a FT work week. But our contracts do not protect us from this. No one will pay us for this, or even thank us in particular. But unlike tenured, staff, or other regular employees, we get no leave or comp time. My annual,two-semester contracts = one 91/2-month contract. I spent most of my unemployed, UNPAID two and a half summer months in 2020 taking UMD and Zoom training programs to help me increase my online teaching effectiveness. I SHOULD NOT HAVE NEEDED TO SPEND THIS TIME AS AN UNPAID VOLUNTEER! UMD has no way to provide me comp time or pay for this.

Like GA students in this state, PTK staff need union representation too.

Sincerely,

Laura Suzanne Gordon
PTK
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daniel.greene.pdf

Uploaded by: Greene, Daniel

Position: FAV

Delores G. Kelley, Chair
Brian J. Feldman, Vice Chair
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SB 521
Supporting

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

I write to support SB 521 in the strongest possible terms. My testimony comes from both my expertise as a scholar of workforce development and from my personal experience. I am a former graduate assistant at the University of Maryland, now a faculty member. During my PhD, I worked as a teaching assistant, instructor of record, administrative assistant, and research assistant. After my PhD, I worked in a corporate research lab at Microsoft. Now, I am a faculty member in the fast-growing and highly innovative College of Information Studies, supervising both teaching and research assistants. I love this University, but it will lag behind its R1 peers in places like Berkeley, Michigan, and Washington as long as it undervalues its graduate assistants.

My graduate studies were impeded by rules that changed from work context to work context. Each supervisor had different rules for starting and stopping work. One supervisor's paperwork mistakes resulted in a late paycheck that nearly caused me to cancel my wedding. Others have had it much worse, particularly international students who cannot pursue off-campus work and, because of their visa, have no bargaining power with respect to their lab leader. That supervisor can request whatever hours or duties they want, and there is no legally-binding space for negotiation. Collective bargaining would establish a set of ground rules and a transparent, enforceable system for dispute wherein both sides are valued equally.

My commitment to graduate unionization has only strengthened as a faculty member supervising graduate assistants. I cannot teach a class or run a lab without their work, and I wish there was one set of ground rules that governed that work. Their work in teaching is undeniable: PhD students are regularly instructors of record, or TA's with their own sections. Research assistants' work may seem fuzzier, but the opposite is true. Our labs cannot run without our research assistants. My RA's are not working on their "own" research; they are working on my research, on tasks that I instruct them to complete, with deadlines I set for them. This is a supervisory relationship that only sometimes correlates with an advisory relationship (e.g., in any given semester we are often looking for RA's to just complete a task, and we will not serve on their PhD committees). Any supervisor should be a good mentor, but that is true of any work context—whether it's a lab or a restaurant or a factory.

I wish for a collectively-bargained contract to govern these relationships. In supervision, I want a set of ground rules that everyone is clear on and which can be enforced by a third party. In advising, I want my students to have recourse to legally-binding enforcement so that a mistake

from me or my peers will not hurt their careers in the long-term. Those ground rules would make my job easier and would allow me to focus on my real job: Research and teaching.

I also want a collectively-bargained contract for my graduate students because it will strengthen recruitment of their future peers. The Colleges with which mine competes for PhD students are largely unionized R1 universities: UCLA, Berkeley, U Michigan, Illinois, Cornell, and Washington. Graduate school is a significant commitment. The security that a contract offers—and the ability to bargain for matters of compensation and work duties—is a competitive advantage that those schools have and which we lack. State policy creates a work environment that prevents me from recruiting top-tier graduate students.

Finally, and precisely because many of these schools have been unionized for decades, we don't have to guess as to whether graduate unionization harms student-faculty relations. It's a well-studied question. In their classic 2013 study "Effects of Unionization on Graduate Student Employees" in the *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, Rogers, Eaton & Voss surveyed graduate students at four unionized and non-union R1 universities. They found that unionization has no negative effects on graduate student career outcomes or perceptions of academic freedom, and in some cases has a positive effect. Further, "unionized students were more likely than nonunionized students to report respect for differing opinions in their university" and unionized graduate students were more likely to agree that their advisors accepted them as competent professionals, that their advisors were effective in their role, and that their advisors were role models whom they wanted to model their careers on.

The facts are clear: The advising relationship is not harmed by unionization, if anything it is improved by it. Our values are clear: Graduate assistants make this university work, and they deserve a say in it. And my own position as a supervisor and advisor is clear: Graduate unionization would foster a consistent work environment that allows me to focus on my research and teaching in the present and recruit top-tier graduate students in the future. Please support our work at UMD by passing SB 521.

Sincerely,

Daniel Greene, PhD
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saeed.hadadan.pdf

Uploaded by: Hadadan, Saeed

Position: FAV

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

SB 521
Supporting

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

Because I want to be able to have legal options in case a grad student's working conditions is not fair, although mine is.

Sincerely,

Saeed Hadadan
Graduate Assistant, CS Department
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valerie.hall.pdf

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 521
Supporting

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

I write today urging you to support SB 521, which would provide graduate students at the University of Maryland and within the rest of the University System of Maryland the right to organize and collectively bargain. My colleagues and I have no grievance procedure, no HR channels through which to work, and no recourse to address basic inequalities. We can not take sick days or to refuse requests from supervisors and administrators that could endanger our health and safety or that of our colleagues, for fear refusal would lead to punitive measures, including the loss of our funding and an early end to our studies.

This situation has been brought into stark relief during this time of global pandemic, when many of my colleagues are being asked to continue in-person teaching, data collection, and fieldwork without clear guidance and resources from the university. Although many of us have concerns about our health and safety, we must continue to perform these duties for fear of losing our positions in our programs. Many of us have had our personal research delayed by months or years due to the pandemic and some have had their basic subsistence threatened by funding cuts, but we have no channels through which to petition the university for support as grants, fellowships, and other funding sources are paused or reduced during the pandemic. We continue working with the knowledge that, despite demanding these services from us, the university will not reimburse us for medical bills or lost wages should we become ill or need to be hospitalized.

We have all chosen to pursue our graduate studies with and contribute our talents and labors to the University System of Maryland, passing over other opportunities elsewhere, and we are proud of what we provide to the State, our Universities, and our programs. 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 for working conditions that protect our health and safety. Again, I urge lawmakers to support SB 521, 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.

Valerie Hall
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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 521
Supporting

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

If there has ever been a time to do what it right, this is it. We are in a significant economic, social, and public health crisis, but we are also in a key moment for meaningful political change. Passing Senate Bill 521 is but one crucial step to help protect workers' rights and invest in the lives of all who live, work, and learn in the state of Maryland.

I am writing to express my strongest of the right of graduate student workers to collectively bargain, and I see that as a win for the state of Maryland and for higher education. 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 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 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 work force benefits not only workers but also the educational experience of its students and the status of its research record. I served for five years as Director of Graduate Studies in my department, and we 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 improve its status among the ranks of the best universities in this country, it is imperative that it, too, recognize all of its workers. Moreover, this public health crisis has made it even more visible how important it is that all

workers have the right to be active participants in shaping the conditions of their labor. 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.

Sincerely,

Christina Hanhardt

Associate Professor, Department of American Studies (for identification purposes only)

University of Maryland, College Park

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yeming.hao.pdf

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 521
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 521.

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
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naila.m.al.hasan.pdf

Uploaded by: Hasan, Naila M. Al

Position: FAV

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

SB 521
Supporting

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

Members of the legislature, I am writing to you to ask that you support SB 0521. I am an alumnus graduate research assistant at the University of Maryland, College Park campus. As a native Houstonian and transplant to the DMV area, the shock of higher cost of living with minimal pay differences from University of Houston's main campus was not lost on me. Where I was able to afford a car and gas to commute long distances within the Houston area, I am yet to be able to afford multiple trips into Washington DC, at a mere 7 mile distance, in my five years in the DMV.

I am writing to you to ask your support for this bill as collective bargaining offers an effective means to address not only cost of living and healthcare concerns, but most importantly, fulfilling employment rights and responsibilities of student employees. When research and graduate assistants do not have a way to formally and bindingly negotiate with the university to address labor and employment issues, they are unable to contribute productively to not only their employer, but society at large. This is evident from multiple studies that have shown that at least one-third to half of PhD students suffer from mental health challenges [1][2]. SB 0521 would reduce student worries and thus, mental load, stemming from lack of official duties, financial and healthcare concerns. This additionally ties in to not only maintaining a healthy workforce but also retaining talent within the nation, limiting brain drain to other countries, furthermore, ensuring that national security is not compromised.

Many of my old and new colleagues have already testified to the details of damages, mental or otherwise, incurred as a result of lack of worker's rights in the University student employment system. I hope that I was able to make a clear and direct connection between having an educated, healthy pipeline of innovators to ultimately, the safety and security of our nation. Your support of SB 0251 is paramount to the future of our country and I urge you to vote in favor of it.

[1] E. Pain, "Ph.D. students face significant mental health challenges," *Science* (80-.), Apr. 2017.

[2] K. Levecque, F. Anseel, A. De Beuckelaer, J. Van der Heyden, and L. Gisle, "Work organization and mental health problems in PhD students," *Res. Policy*, vol. 46, no. 4, pp. 868–879, May 2017.

Sincerely,
Naila M. Al Hasan
PhD, Department of Materials Science & Engineering
Alumnus Graduate Research Assistant
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landry.horimbere.pdf

Uploaded by: Horimbere, Landry

Position: FAV

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

SB 521
Supporting

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

Graduate students play a central role in making the physics department work. They TA and grade physics classes, teach most labs and do most of the reaserch that bringing in funding for future research. How, they are not assured support to do research in their preferred field. I have know many students that had to leave the school and the field after working hard for 2 to 3 years at TAs. This is especially common for students from minoritised backgrounds, namely black students and women.

Sincerely,

Landry Horimbere
Graduate Student, Department of Physics
University of Maryland, College Park
907 Philip Powers Drive, Laurel, MD 20707
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alexander.hoyle.pdf

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 521
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
Riverdale, MD
hoyle@umd.edu

margaret.rose.hunt.pdf

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 521
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
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harold.charles.daume.iii.pdf

Uploaded by: III, Harold Charles Daume

Position: FAV

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

SB 521
Supporting

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

I strongly support collective bargaining rights for students; such rights make life better for them, as well as for faculty.

Sincerely,

Harold Charles Daume III
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emily.jiang.pdf

Uploaded by: Jiang, Emily

Position: FAV

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

SB 521
Supporting

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

I am writing in support of SB 521. I believe graduate students should have the legal right to collective bargaining, should we vote to unionize.

At the beginning of Fall Semester, 2020, the department of physics assigned teaching assistantships to us. Several lab courses were run in person, meaning that a significant proportion of our graduate students would have to be teaching in person during a pandemic, else lose their funding for the semester. In-person teaching positions had no additional hazard pay, nor were the safety protocols in labs clearly communicated to us. The exception to this was students with pre-existing medical conditions, which students could use to ask the department to assign them to a fully online teaching position. For students to be forced into the uncomfortable position of either revealing their medical history, or choose between unemployment and personal endangerment was an extremely stressful situation. I myself am on immunosuppressants, and as a vulnerable member of the population it was especially disturbing that other graduate students in my department could be forced into a dangerous position. As many physics graduate students also rent rooms together in the same house, it is not enough to only allow vulnerable students to teach online, when in fact housemates could become direct vectors of transmission. Fortunately, the department was receptive to our negotiations, and with our feedback was able to allow students to teach only in positions they felt comfortable with. However, this could easily have gone another direction—our wellbeing was in the hands of the goodwill of the physics department heads. If they had simply chosen not to prioritize our voices, we would have had no legal recourse. If HB 214/SB 658 passes, university administrators will be legally required to at least consider our thoughts, and we will no longer be in such a vulnerable position.

An argument often put forward is that graduate students are simply students, not workers—every aspect of the PhD program is engineered for our own education, including teaching. This is patently false. My teaching assistantship last semester consisted of grading problem sets for around 60 students every week, which took up a significant amount of time. To those who consider graduate students not to be workers, I ask—how does grading the same introductory problem again and again 60 times a week contribute to my education? It takes time away from my own classes and research, and certainly does not make me a better teacher or instructor—I have very limited interaction with the students. Graduate students perform these essential functions simply because they must be done, and not because they become better instructors by

grading. Anyone with romantic notions of PhD students preparing for professorship by doing teaching assistantships has never held one of these grading positions. As an aspiring theoretical physicist, as opposed to an experimental physicist, I will continue to grade throughout my PhD. If the logic that all our duties as PhD students are for our own education holds, then it follows that theorists are preparing for a heavier teaching career as professors, which is patently false. The reality is that theory students continue to teach beyond their first few years due to lack of funding for research assistants, not because we will be teaching more than our experimental colleagues as professors. Students with external funding are also not required to take on teaching assistantships—if these positions were designed for our own benefit, why would they not be required for students with funding? What are these teaching assistantships then, if not jobs to support us financially? As workers, we deserve bargaining rights—or at least the legal option to vote for it.

Thank you for your consideration, and I hope to have made a clear argument in favor of SB 521.

Sincerely,

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Uploaded by: Karim, Ramsey

Position: FAV

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

SB 521
Supporting

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

We absolutely have the right to collectively bargain. We work at the university, we conduct funded research, we teach the UM system's students, and we do all this both in pursuit of a degree and (more importantly) as our job. This is our livelihood right now. We are paid so that we may eat, pay rent and utilities, help support families. But unlike many employees who work to accomplish these same needs, we are unable to improve our conditions when they are harmful. The right to collectively bargain is not exclusively a matter of higher pay; it is also a mechanism through which we can work with the university to protect ourselves against departments or advisers who mistreat us. When things are good for us, of course we don't feel that we need this. But when things get bad, we suddenly realize we have no substantial voice. We are at the mercy of the departments and advisers who have turned against us, and we have no one in our corner. Right now, we are forbidden from having such a voice within our workplace, the university. I strongly urge you to overturn this and grant us, as graduate workers, the right to collectively bargain. I appreciate your consideration and representation of us.

Sincerely,

Ramsey Karim
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monis.khan.pdf

Uploaded by: khan, monis

Position: FAV

Delores G. Kelley, Chair
Brian J. Feldman, Vice Chair
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SB 521
Supporting

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

I am a graduate assistant with the marketing communications department at the Robert H. Smith School of Business at the University of Maryland, College Park. I fully submit this effort to unionize so we may use the power of collective bargaining for our rights.

Sincerely,

monis khan
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kezhi.kong.pdf

Uploaded by: Kong, Kezhi

Position: FAV

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

SB 521
Supporting

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

Graduate students only earn unlivable wages from the university. Spendings should only be done after careful and meticulous calculations. As far as I'm concerned, my salary can only afford local bottom-tier appartments, which will take half of my income. I don't have any other choice of living because I can not afford it.

Sincerely,

Kezhi Kong
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Uploaded by: Kramida, Gregory

Position: FAV

Delores G. Kelley, Chair
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SB 521
Supporting

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

We ask you to support and pass SB 521, to legalize collective bargaining rights for all Maryland's higher education public employees.

My testimony hasn't changed from that last year's bill, but here it is again if you'd like to review.

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 521, keeping the points I covered above in mind, please ask yourselves how else failure to pass SB 521 can be morally justifiable, and, if it is not passed, what it speaks of us as a state and a people.

Sincerely,

Gregory Kramida
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Graduate Research Assistant,

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Uploaded by: Krell, Michael William

Position: FAV

Delores G. Kelley, Chair
Brian J. Feldman, Vice Chair
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SB 521
Supporting

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

I am a full time doctoral student in Mathematics Education with two small children. I receive a full stipend along with some extra financial awards from the College of Education and I would not be able to support myself, let alone my children, if it were not for my partner's income (that of a public school teacher).

As a secondary education supervisor, I perform an essential function for the University of Maryland's College of Education. Without my services, the College of Education's MCert Interns (Teacher Candidates) would not receive the support and guidance in their field teaching placements they need to become competent high school math teachers. I also work with several professors on a National Science Foundation-funded research project, and help maintain the Center for Math Education's website, among other responsibilities. This is all in addition to taking 10 (doctoral-level) credit hours of courses per semester and caring for a two-year-old and a six-year-old.

I understand and appreciate the fact that I am receiving part of the compensation for my labor in course work. However, my labor is essential to the functioning of the College of Education and, as a laborer, I have no representation or voice. I am told how many hours my work will take each week--an estimate that frequently falls well short of the mark--and I am not paid enough to live. If it were not for the love and generosity of my partner, I would not be able to continue my career as a graduate student.

If the University of Maryland seeks to uphold and preserve its reputation as a progressive, inclusive, and human-centered institution, it must allow its graduate students to collectively bargain for their labor. If it instead continues to unilaterally extract un- and under-paid labor from its graduate student population, the University will publicly declare its own hypocrisy and the emptiness of its progressive claims.

Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,

Michael William Krell

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sahana.kumar.pdf

Uploaded by: Kumar, Sahana

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Delores G. Kelley, Chair
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SB 521
Supporting

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

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.

Personally as an international student from a third world country, it has been hard to balance expenditure and cost of living. For the hours of work we put in, it doesn't seem like we get fair pay and it has been hard to maintain savings account. We feel guilty spending on ourselves even if we deserve it.

I implore you to pass SB521 and legalize collective bargaining rights for Maryland's graduate employees now.

Sincerely,

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Uploaded by: Kyprianidis, Antonios

Position: FAV

Delores G. Kelley, Chair
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SB 521
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,

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FSE SB521 Packet.pdf

Uploaded by: Lamb, Rachel

Position: FAV



Bill: **Senate Bill 521**
Title: **State Personnel -
Collective Bargaining**
Date: **February 18, 2021**
Committee: **Senate Finance**
Position: **SUPPORT**

Executive Summary:

A. 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).

- Among Big Ten schools, UMCP has the greatest discrepancy between required cost-of-living and graduate stipends.
- UMCP's minimum stipend is below that of many Big Ten and peer schools.
- More than 50% of Big Ten schools are unionized.

D. Collective does not harm, and in fact benefits, the educational atmosphere with negligible economic impact. (p. 9).

- Peer-reviewed research suggests graduate student unionization actually improves the educational atmosphere and shows that economic concerns are often "overstated."

E. Graduate employees have been disproportionately affected by COVID-19 (p. 11).

- Existing power imbalances and financial vulnerability have forced graduate employees to assume extra burdens and dangerous working conditions.
- Graduate employees have been made to feel precarious and to suffer undue anxiety.
- These outcomes have been caused by the poor supervision and administration which would have been remedied through a clear, enforceable contract.

F. There is broad, continuously expressed support among graduate employees (p. 14).

- 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 SB521.

Inquiries for further data or questions can be directed to fearlessstudentemployees@gmail.com.

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

Numerous bills have been introduced to deal 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 / SB 658

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 (no change)</u>	2019: \$17,455.00
2014: \$15,675.00	<u>2017: \$16,144.00 (no change)</u>	2020: \$18,791.00
<u>2015: \$16,144.00</u>	<u>2018: \$16,144.00 (no change)</u>	2021: \$18,979.00

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 that “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 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, which suggested a vast range between colleges, with some colleges' graduate employees working nearly twice as many hours as other colleges' employees while doing similar work.
- **Issues with supervisors:**
 - **In 2010**, graduate employees conveyed 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 a "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 that 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 policy 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 must "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 Date	Economic livability (salary, housing)	Parental resources for GAs (childcare, leave, etc.)	Training / preparation / expectations	IP Rights	Issues regarding international student employment / training	Sick and Bereavement Leave	Issues with GAAC process	Information Gathering	Grievance Policy Issues
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	
Jeff Franke	11/30/2016	x	x	x	x		x		x	x
	4/17/2017	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x
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
	5/7/2019	x		x		x	x	x	x	x
	11/13/2019	x		x		x			x	x
	4/7/2020	x	x	x		x	x			
	Fall 2020	Dean Fetter, Provost Rankin, and VP Colella did not meet with GAAC.								

Illustrative exchanges from two GAAC meetings:

Regarding 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.”

Regarding the 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)

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.”

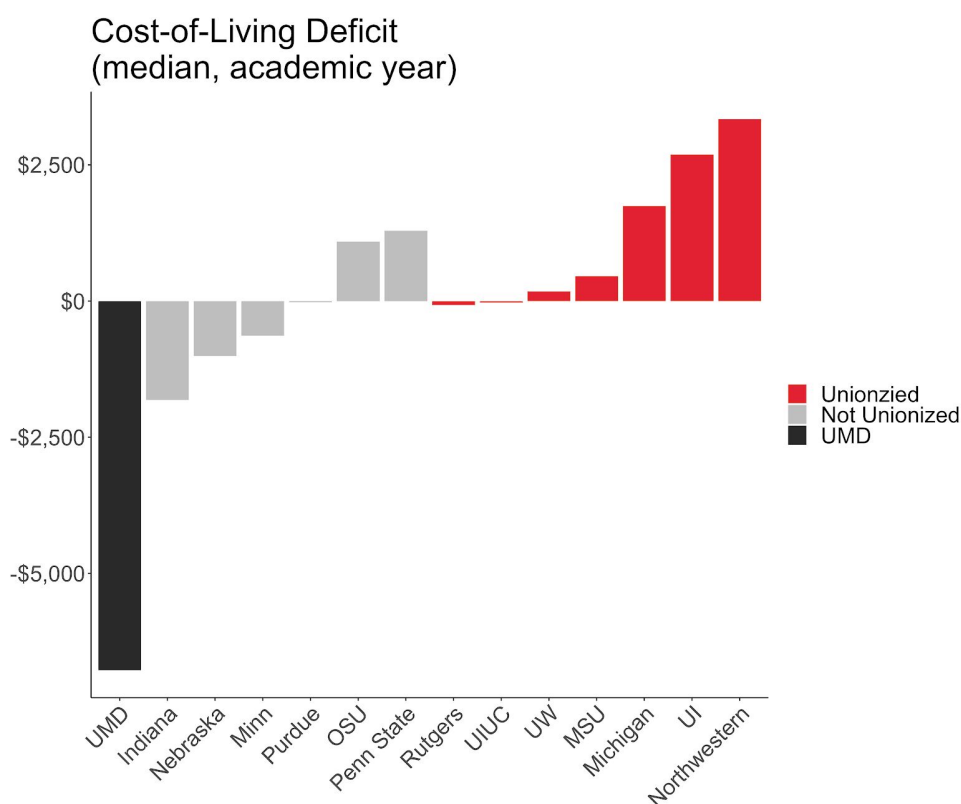
Regarding poor salaries:

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.

Graduate stipends at UMCP, relative to the area's cost of living, are *by far the lowest in the Big Ten*. This cost-of-living deficit, defined as the required cost of living for the area¹ less the median salary², is over \$6,700 for the academic year and \$11,000 for the entire year (if we instead calculate the deficit with the minimum stipend determined by the university, it is a staggering \$16,000). These findings corroborate what has been repeatedly expressed in student testimonials: graduate stipends are *entirely insufficient to support workers*. Tuition reimbursement does not buy groceries.³ The cost-of-living deficit is the largest in the Big Ten, irrespective of how it is calculated: either using each university's minimum stipend, the median compensation over the 9-month academic year, or the median compensation over the full year.



¹ Determined by the MIT Living Wage Calculator, an independent third-party, livingwage.mit.edu

² Median stipend information from phdstipends.com. This self-reported information significantly correlates with the minimum stipend, $\rho=0.95$.

³ Moreover, the university considers reimbursement part of the total compensation of all graduate workers, even the majority of PhDs who have already completed coursework.

Institution	Unionization	Required Annual Income For One Adult	Minimum annual GA Salary (20 hrs/wk.)	Maximum Hours Per Week, per policy
Northwestern University	In process	\$28,280	\$33,504 (12-month)	20
University of California, Berkeley	Yes - UAW	\$34,288	\$21,911.5 (10-month)	21.25 per week* (340 hrs/semester)
University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA)	Yes (UAW)	\$31,692	\$20,136	~21.25 per week* (340 hrs/semester)
University of Wisconsin	Yes (TAA)	\$25,765	\$20,500	~22.5 per week (360 hrs/semester)
Rutgers University	Yes (AFT)	\$30,768	\$29,426	15
University of Michigan	Yes (AFT)	\$27,672	\$22,433	20*
Penn State University	No	\$26,281	\$20,790	
University of Iowa	Yes (UE)	\$22,236	\$20,041	20*
University of Washington	Yes (UAW)	\$31,750	\$21,924	~21.25 per week* (220 hrs/quarter)
Ohio State University	No	\$23,844	\$19,280	
University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign	Yes (AFT)	\$25,039	\$18,500	20*
UMD, College Park	No	\$35,036	\$18,979	20
University of Minnesota	No	\$26,179	\$15,342 (9-month)	
Purdue University	No	\$23,533	\$15,448	20*
Michigan State University	Yes (AFT)	\$24,390	\$14,820	20*
University of Nebraska	No	\$22,837	\$10,300	19.6
University of Indiana	No	\$24,422	\$9,816 (10 month)	No information

*Varies by appointment ($\frac{1}{4}$, $\frac{1}{2}$, $\frac{3}{4}$, full).

Minimum stipends retrieved from each school's website / contract

Collective does not harm, and in fact benefits, the educational atmosphere with negligible economic impact.

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. These findings further suggest that the **financial impact of graduate-student unionization is often negligible**.

Herbert, W. A., & van der Naald, J. (2020) A different set of rules? NLRB proposed rule making and student workers unionization rights. *Journal of Collective Bargaining in the Academy*, 11, Article 1.

This study analyses federal guidelines, 42 current collective bargaining agreements covering student workers, and the past 50 years of graduate student unionization. It concludes that graduate worker contracts have remained remarkably consistent in their ability to clearly demarcate the academic and educational obligations of universities. Furthermore it shows that **the classification of graduate assistants as employees is consistent with the guidelines established by the US Bureau of Labor Statistics** and argues that a reevaluation of the rights and protections of graduate assistants is required in light of their increasing role in the 21st century university.

Graduate employees have been disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020-2021

No time illustrates the faults of a system or institution more than the time of a crisis. Graduate assistants have often acted as the frontline, essential workers of the University System. They have done this lacking the standard protections afforded to other state employees—protections these other employees enjoy through their collectively-bargained contracts.

We want to be quite clear: we do not believe graduate employees would have been put in harm's way, or asked to take on so much uncompensated work, if we had a collectively-bargained contract. Because we do not have that, other CONTRACTED employees and faculty have been protected during this public health crisis and we have absorbed their work and risk.

Numerous accounts from 2020-2021 graduate employees demonstrate the often-dismissive, irresponsible attitude of the University administration toward the graduate student body, both employees and student employees. After reviewing hundred of examples, we've groups COVID-related issues into three categories:

1. Existing power imbalances and financial vulnerability have forced graduate employees to assume **extra burdens and dangerous working conditions**.
2. Graduate employees have been made to feel **precarious and to suffer undue anxiety**.
3. These outcomes have been caused not by COVID, but rather by the **poor supervision and administration** we've been decrying for years—conditions which would have been remedied through a clear, enforceable contract.

Extra Burdens and Dangerous Working Conditions

COVID created new work for the University—reinventing classes to go online, dealing with new pressures on students, and adapting nearly every part of university life. It appears that graduate assistants are bearing the brunt of the burden. Moreover, many have been forced to work on-site, on the “front line”, while their supervisors, being more senior, have been allowed to stay back in safety. And these graduate workers had to undertake these extra responsibilities and increased risk of exposure without a dime of extra pay or hazard pay of any kind. Here are a few excerpts from their stories:



*“... instead of hiring another TA to help us with this teaching load, they're simply forcing us to do **more work** for the same lab **with no increase in pay**.”*

*“... being entirely virtual last semester in fall 2020 was **extraordinarily stressful** and created a **great deal of extra work**.”*

*“I'm not sure how **proctoring for eight hours instead of one** for what is supposed to be a one-hour exam can be justified.”*

“Covid-19 made hiring research assistants for summer field work almost impossible in 2020 and vastly increased the amount of work done by graduate students.”

“Increased workload from TA assignment [was] not caused by supervisor, but by the lack of hiring [of] undergraduate TAs.”



*“... received **no hazard pay** ... [abridged] ... my professor tried to keep everyone in the lab **claiming all of our projects were under severe threat.**”*

“GAs are the ones continuing to carry out research, meeting with human subjects, while faculty are allowed to quarantine safely.”

*“I am asked to **teach labs in person, during COVID.** It's not the safest option, but **I need the money...**”*

*“I have continued to live with students on campus to ensure that students remain healthy and safe.... **I have essentially been a frontline worker.**”*

More Precarity and Anxiety

COVID had a devastating financial impact on many people. Loss of jobs, loss of other sources of income, and uncertainty about the future have become the norm. Graduate students are no exception. The only difference is that Graduate Assistants *are* the exception, when it comes to the right to collectively bargain. Thus, when financial disruptions come to the University, they can be arbitrarily passed onto graduate workers, and those workers have nowhere to turn:

*“I can't afford rent in College Park on my stipend, and I **no longer qualify for unemployment** because of the nebulous status of GAs at UMD.”*

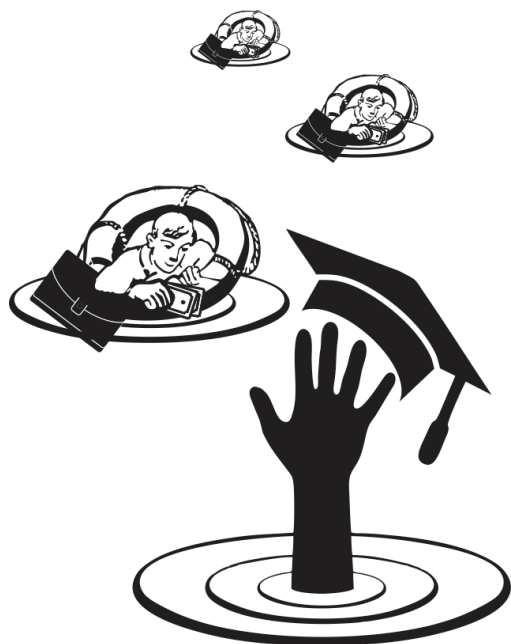


“I didn't get paid for two months and had to move in with my mother.”

*“If funding gets cut due to the current economic situation, I cannot claim unemployment ... [abridged] ... it is **mathematically impossible for me to save money, I will starve ...**”*

*“I have had **really bad anxious and depressive episodes,** and yet still am **expected to continue business as usual.**”*

*“Those who did not already have a contract, including myself, were told GA positions were unlikely due to budget cuts resulting from Covid-19 impacts. **I was facing the possibility of suspending my progress toward graduation** if the department was unable to find a position for me.”*



“Every waking decision is shrouded in economic guilt. I never feel like I can afford to do anything, even though I am working all the time. I remember countless nights leaving work at midnight and being hungry, but deciding I could save money by sleeping until breakfast.”

Poor Handling by Administration

The pandemic meant huge changes for everyone. Graduate students suddenly had both classes and jobs moved online. Research was interrupted and, in many cases, hasn't resumed. Many graduate students have been unable to return to campus at all. And yet, University system policies rarely made sense for, or were tailored to, the thousands of Graduate Assistants that work for them. Policies for “students” didn't address work responsibilities and it was unclear whether policies for “employees” applied.

Meanwhile, the administration gave little financial support for or guidance on how to transition to remote courses and other altered workflows. The limbo that Graduate Assistants have to deal with every day became especially acute:

“I have very little direction as to what my GA duties are ...”

“I'm paying rent in MD, even though I'm not there. All that happened because the communication I received from UMD last summer sounded like I was needed in-person.”



“My work has been drastically cut due to COVID protocols for social distancing, but [neither] my advisor nor the university have been supportive.”

“My supervisors ... [abridged]... suggested I buy fancy bluetooth headphones. I am working on an eight-year-old laptop ... [abridged]... We don't earn enough money to pay the rent, so we certainly don't make enough to buy \$200 headphones and new laptops...”

“I TA-ed for a class, and had to go on campus to work, without much guidance about whether or not I could refuse to work in person, etc.”

“...not having clear policies of how ‘time away’ may be handled ... creates impossible situations not just for students, but also for faculty and administrators.”

There is broad, continuously expressed support among graduate employees.

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

USM Graduate Student Governments:

University System of Maryland Student Council (2021)
 Graduate Student Government (UMCP) (2018-2021)
 Graduate Student Association (Bowie) (2018-2021)
 Graduate Student Association (University of Baltimore) (2020-2021)
 Graduate Student Government (UMES) (2018-2020)
 University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science (2018-2020)

USM Student Groups:

Chinese International Graduate Students in Computer Science (UMCP)
 College Democrats (UMCP)
 The Association of Communication Graduate Students at Maryland (COMMGrads) (UMCP)
 The Diamondback (2018, 2020)
 Fearless Student Employees (UMCP)
 Graduate Assistant Advisory Committee (UMCP)
 The History Graduate Student Association (UMCP)
 Human Resource Development Evolve Society (Bowie)
 Latin American Studies Center Graduate Collective (UMCP)
 MaryPIRG (UMCP)
 Mechanical Engineering Graduate Students (UMCP)
 PLUMAS: Political Latinx United for Movement and Action in Society (UMCP)
 Science for the People (UMCP)

USM Campus Leaders:

Annie Rappeport - USM Student Council President (2020-2021)
 Daniel Lafflin - Graduate Student Government President - UMCP (2020-2021)
 Simon Sheaff - Graduate Student Government VP Legislative Affairs - UMCP (2020-2021)
 Diamond Bracey - Graduate Student Association President - Bowie (2018-2019)
 Christina Goethel - Graduate Student Council President - UMCES (2020)
 Jocelyn Simmons - Graduate Student Government President - UMES (2020)
 Jonathan Allen - Student Government President - UMCP (2019)
 Alexander M. Dunphy - Graduate Assistant Advisory Committee Chair - UMCP (2019-2021)

Number of signatories petitioning for collective bargaining rights:

2019: 808

2020: 890

2021 (Since Jan. 8th): 848**A. James Clark School of Engineering**

Abubakr Mohamed Hamid	Gilad Nave	Madeleine Farrer	Sabrina M. Curtis
Adelaide M. Nolan	Gillian Boyce	Majed Hamed	Sally Wang
Amirhossein Yazdkhasti	Hamed Ghaedi	Mazda M	Samuel Charles Giedzinski
Amit Kumar Kundu	Hirbod Akhavantaheri	Megan Kimicata	Samuel Lee
Andrew Goffin	Hunter Kippen	Michael Kenneth Dawson Jr.	Sanaz Aliari
Anmol Sikka	Jacob D Isbell	Miguel Alvarez	Sang-Jin Chung
Arafat Hasnain	Jair Guilherme Certorio	Mihirkumar Prajapati	Erin Moore
Austin Thomas	Janel Niska	Minhyeng Kim	Akshay Manoj
Brett Setera	Jawairia Ahmad	Mohsen Rezaeizadeh	Sergio Arnoldo Garcia Mejia
Cheng-Yi Lee	Jennifer Bates	Muhammed Ozturk	Shahrzad Saffari Ghandehari
Christina Conrad	Joshua Michael Little	Naila Al Hasan	Shuangqi Luo
Christopher Lamb	Joy Shen	Neha Joshi	Shuke Li
Debapriya Bhattacharjee	Katherin Arias	Nestor Raul Romero Chavarria	Sidra Gibeault
Dhruva Sahrawat	Kayla Chun	Priyatham Kattakinda	Sophia Relph
Dushyant Chaudhari	Kendyl Waddell	Rachel J Suitor	Suraj Ravimanalan
Eesh Kamrah	Khashayar Aghilinasrollahabadi	Rahil Parikh	Turash Haque Pial
Ellery Klein	Koushik Marepally	Rahil Parikh	Uday Saha
Eric A Carmona	Kristen Croft	Ravin Singh	Xiangyu Mao
Frank Cianciarulo	Linda Waters	Rebecca Osborn	Yeming Hao
Frederick Tsai	Louis DankovichIV	Rishi Roy	Yong Pei

College of Agriculture and Natural Resources

Alejandro Lopez-Aguilar	Bhavit Chhabra	Kathleen Evans	Taylor Francis Schulden
Alexandre Perrault	Bibek Bhattachan	Kazi Rifat Antara	Thomata Doe
Alexis J. Peters	Biwek Gairhe	Michael Ronzetti	Usoshi Chatterjee
Amber Fandel	Brian Scott	Nour El Hussein	Wu-Joo Daniel Lee
Angela Soto Saenz	Emma Podietz	Rahat Sharif	Ying Chen
Anmol Kandel	Helen Boniface	Rishov Goswami	Zhi Zhang
Arpita Aditya	Izabelle Mendez	Sarah Rothman	Arielle Arsenault-Benoit
Bhargava Teja Sallapalli	Jain Kim	Sohini Dutt	Christopher Samoray

College of Arts and Humanities

Aaron Bartlett	Daniela Hernández Rodríguez	Kalin Cecilia Schultz	Rebecca Cawthorne
Adam Liter	Danielle Griffin	Karin Roseblatt	Rhys Burgess
Adina Oved	Delight Jessica Agboada	Kathryn Rose Karoly	Rhys Burgess
Aida Roige	Diana Proenza	Kathryn Thier	Richard Bell
Alannah Hensley	Divine Aboagye	Kelsey Sherrod Michael	Rion Amilcar Scott
Alex Thomas	Divine Aboagye	Kerishma Panigrahi	Robyn Muncy
Alexander Miller	Dominique Joe	Kristopher Pourzal	Roger A Bailey
Alexandra Krauska	Drew Thomas Ashby-King	Kristy Maddux	Sarah Ross
Alexandria Pecoraro	Eben Levey	Kyle Bickoff	Scott Trudell
Alexis Walston	Elizabeth Catchmark	Kyle J. Stelzer	Shen Pan
Allison Coe	Elizabeth Dinnenyy	Kyle Pruitt	Siv B. Lie
Alvaro Villar Cobo	Elizabeth Massey	Kylee Manganiello	Skye de Saint Felix
Alyson Farzad-Phillips	Elizabeth Nonemaker	Laura Suzanne Gordon	Sophie Hess
Amanda Chen	Emily Fox	Lauren Carter Cain	Sugandha Shukla
Anita Atwell Seate	Emily Mitchell	Lawrence Malčić	Tara N Demmy
Ari Perez	Emily Smith	Lindsey R. Barr	Taylor Hourigan
Ashlyne Ludwig	Erin Green	Mariángel Villalobos	Thomas M. Messersmith
Austin Sposato	Eun Kyoung Lee	Martin Gonzales	Tita Chico
Bianca Licitra	Fernando Morris Duran	Maša Bešlin	Trent McDonald
Brian R Sarginger	Gabrielle Robinson-Tillenburg	Matthew Kirschenbaum	Umisha KC
Brice Bowrey	Gennady Kurin	Matthew Miller	VaShawn Savoy McIlwain-Lightfoot
Caitlin Eaves	Gianina K. Lockley	Matthew Salzano	Vianna Newman Dennis
Caitlin Kennedy	Gianina K. Lockley	Max Erdemandi	Victor Hernandez-Sang
Carlo Antonio Villanueva	Hagar Attia	Max Lasky	Victoria Ledford
Carly Woods	Hayden J Kramer	Maytal Mark	Wanda Hernandez
Caroline Angle	Heather Reynolds	Meghan Collins	William Robin
Caroline Rocher Barnes	Hope Kay	Meghan J. Creek	Yuhe Wang
Carolyn Robbins	Jacqueline Mueck	Megu Itoh	Joanna Avery
Caterina Ieronimo	Jade Olson	Michael Alan Katski	Jonathan Reyes
Catherine Anne Robinson	Jeannette Iannacone	Michael Marinelli	Karandeep Takhtani
Cecilia Edith Battauz	Jeannette Schollaert	Micheline Kaufmann	Katelyn Huggins Baird
Channing Tucker	Jenna Gerdson	Micheline Kaufmann	Jane Sonneman
Charlie Fanning	Jennifer Romine	Mickal Adler II	Alexandra Melinchok
Charlotte Rachel Richardson-Deppe	Jeremy Grossman	Miguel Amaguaña	Aryn Neurock Schriener
Chauncey Dennie	Jesse Moy Leong	Mikol Bailey	Casi O'Neill

Christin Washington	Jessica Wicks-Allen	Misti Yang	Lily Byrne
Christina Hanhardt	Jiawen Zhang	Molly Flanagan	Matthew Herskovitz
Clara Danos	Jin R. Choi	Nancy Berenice Vera	Logan Dechter
Claudia Rojas	John Monday	Natalie McGartland	Alex Melvin
Cody Britson	John Monday	Nathaniel Gerber	David Montier
Cody Gomez	John Patrick M. Fetherston	Nick Joyce	Madeline Tindall
Colin James Doyle	Jonelle Walker	Patrick Allies	Kenna Hernly
Connor Locke	Joseph Gurrola	Patrick Allies	Ann Abney
Connor Watkins	Joshua Weiner	Peter Handerhan	Brianna Nunez
Connor Watkins	JP Fetherston	Polina Pleshak	Rachael Kirschenmann
Cyrah Ward	Judith Aaron	Rachel Raphael	Erin Taylor
Damien Hagen	Julie Gowin	Rachel Ruisard	Natalie Salive
Damien Smith Pfister	Kader Smail	Rachel Stroup	Jennifer Wachtel
Brennan Rudy	Allison Buser		

College of Behavioral and Social Sciences

Alexandra Rose	Ellen Platts	Hannah Tralka	Quan Shen
Alexandra Tyukavina	Emily Forgo	Kristen Regenauer	Rebecca Traldi
Alison Thieme	Erin McKendry Hill	Kristin Meyering	Reid Haefen White Doctor
Ally Nussbaum	Evan Jones	Lauren Salig	Renee Z Ding
Alyssa Whitcraft	Ferda Erturk	Layne Amerikaner	Robyn T Moore
Amy D Meli	Guan Wang	Leah Sorcher	Rose Ying
Annie Rappeport	Hae Ri Lee	Lia Elizabeth Follet	Ruolan Li
Anusuya Sivaram	Heather Pribut	Lidia Gutu	Ryan Frazier
Aolin Jia	Hyunki Kim	Madison Buntrock	Samantha Primiano
Arseniy Braslavskiy	Ipsita Kumar	Maranna Yoder	Sarah Webb
Arynn Simone Byrd	Ira Kraemer	Maria Rose Tonellato	Sean Houlihan
Autumn Dawn Perkey	Jaemin Eun	Megan Fitter	Seo Hyun Chung
Benjamin J. Schneider	Jamis Bruening	Michelle Erskine	Shradha Sahani
Bridget Makol	Jeffery Charles Sauer	Michelle Moraa	Sydney Hancock
Byron Marroquin	Jess De Palma	Mohammad Abdul Qadir Khan	Sydney Yarbrough
Casey Kindall	Jillian Andres Rothschild	Molly Ellenberg	Teagan Hallene Murphy
Cassandra Philippon	Joel Mabry	Morgan Botdorf	Timothy Kuhn
Chenyu Mao	John Keniston	Nada Babaa	Toryn Sperry
Christina Blomquist	John Keniston	Natasha Robinson	Toryn Sperry
Claire Kaplan	Jordan Abramowitz	Nathalie Gonzalez	Victoria Owens
Constanza V Hurtado Acuña	Julie Cohen	NaYeon Yang	Xin Xu
Dalton Lackey	Kara Mobley	Neerad Deshmukh	Zachary Maher

Daniel James Tuke	Kathleen E. Oppenheimer	Nicholas Galloway	Zheng Liu
Daniela Vazquez	Keaton Hyuckmin Kweon Ellis	Nicholas Marsh	Joshua Steighner
Danielle Koonce	Kelly Cortney Gustafson	Nicholas Praxitelis Vamvakias	Taylor Marie Gedeon
Diana Alkire	Kelly Morrow	Nina Friedman	Esme Pierzchala
Elizabeth K Berger	Kevin Gibbons	Paul Mayo	Asha Pavuluri

College of Computer, Mathematical and Natural Sciences

Aaron Swanson	Deric Session	Kaleb Duelle	Raley Roberts
Abhish Dev	Dillon Teal	Karen Gu	Ramsey Karim
Abu Saleh Musa Patoary	Dolly Hall	Kayla Davie	Richard Barney
Ahmed Abdelkader Abdelrazek	Donald Hong	Kelsey Fulton	Robert Dalka
Ahmed Taha	Dongze He	Kezhi Kong	Ruben Rojas
Ahreum Lee	Eddie Schoute	Kishalay Mahato	Ryen Krusinga
Alec Armstrong	Emily Jiang	Konstantinos pantazis	Saad Mohammad Abrar
Alejandro Flores Velazco	Emily Luteran	Konstantinos Pantazis	Saadik Shaik
Alexander Hoyle	Erica Blum	Kristen Voigt	Saeed Hadadan
Alexander Taylor	Erica Hammerstein	Kristen Voigt	Sagnik Saha
Alexandra Fireman	Ernst Wilhelm Grunow	Kwok Lung Fan	Sahana Kumar
Alexandra Olson	Eva Perry	Landry Horimbere	Samuel August Deitemyer
Alireza Parhizkar	Fu Xiaoxhen	Laura McBride	Sankha Narayan Guria
Allison Carter	Gelila Haile	Laura Zheng	Scott Hancock
Amitava Banerjee	Grace Capshaw	Liam Donald Peterson	Shane Collins
Amitava Banerjee	Greeshma Anand	Lillian Huang	Shannon McDonnell
Andrew Guo	Gregory Kramida	Lindsey Rodio	Shuhong Chen
Andrew Luke Evans	Gregory Kramida	Liz Friedman	Smrithan Ravichandran
Andrew Shaw	Hallie Nicole Pennington	Lucas Railing	Snehesh Shrestha
Anna Fitzmaurice	Han-Chin Shing	Luke Robertson	Srilekha Gandhari
Anna Sotnikova	Haoran Ni	Mackenzie Kong-Sivert	Stephen Sorokanich
Anna Windle	Hong Nhung Nguyen	Mansi Srivastava	Steven Woolford
Anne Richardson	Hoony Kang	Marco Bornstein	Subhayan Sahu
Antonis Kyprianidis	Ishfaaq Ahamed Mohammed Imtiyas	Maria Elaine Cramer	Suteerth Vishnu
Artur Perevalov	J.T. Rustad	Marina Knittel	Swarnav Banik
Astha Singhal	Jacob Prinz	Mario Lopez	Syed Neyaz Ahmed
Aubrey Tingler	Jacob Ward	Mary Grace Hirsch	Tais Mattoso de Andrade Ribeiro
Bihan Shen	James Alexander Bader	Max Springer	Tamoghna Barik
Brandon Gontmacher	Jameson O'Reilly	Max Trevor	Tessa Thorsen
Bryan Wentz	Jeremy Hu	Maya Amouzegar	Thomas Kauffman

Calvin Bao	Jermain McDermott	Michael Rozowski	Timothy Lin
Carter Alan Ball	Jessica Kopew	Mika Chmielewski	Usama Younus
Charlotte Alison Ward	Jessica Metcalf-Burton	Mingbin Yuan	Uzma Javed
Chenlu He	Jianlong Liu	Moustafa Mahmoud Meshry	Vaishnavi Patil
Cherepanova	Jiaxin Yuan	Mozhi Zhang	Wes Pawloski
Christiana Hoff	Jiaxuan Wu	Naman Awasthi	William Chen
Christie Trimble	Jingchen Zhang	Naren Manjunath	Xuesen Na
Christina Ippoliti	Jner Tzern Oon	Noel Warford	Yanelyn Perez
Corey Rennolds	John E Armstrong Jr	Noel Warford	Yi Chen
Custodio de Oliveira Nunes	Jonathan Inbal	Onur Kulaksizoglu	Ying Li
Daniel Arthur Hunter	Jonathan Kunjummen	Ophir Gal	Yuxun Guo
Daniel Smolyak	Jonathan Schenk	Patrick Banner	Zachary Metzler
Daniel Trettel	Joseph Barrow	Pei Zhang	Zachary Steffen
Dantong Ji	Joseph Knisely	Penny Qi	Zajeba Tabashsum
Daphne R Knudsen	Joseph V. DeMartini	Peter Elgee	Zeke Martin Gonzalez
Darsy Smith	Joseph V. DeMartini	Phillip Alvarez	Zishuo Yang
David Ferranti	Joshua Chiel	Pranav Goel	Ziyi Wang
David Yu Miller	Josue Avila Artavia	Pulkit Kumar	Sai Kanth Dacha
Deepthi Raghunandan	Joy Kitson	Qinglin Lin	Kelsey McKee
Deric Session	Jules Metcalf-Burton	Radiandra Soemardi	Rachael Zehrun
Kaitlyn Kyle	Rahul Gaur	Sofia Gonzalez Prieto	

College of Education

Alex Franklin	Howard Ly	Mary Johnson	Stephanie Breen
Amanda Burkholder	Jacquelyn Glidden	Melissa Shelby Davis	Stephanie Cerrato
Andrés A. García	Janisa Hui	Michael William Krell	Stephanie Marie Williams
Antoinette Waller	Jannah Fusenig	Monica Renee Anthony	Tifanee McCaskill
Ashani Jayasekera	Jason Saltmarsh	Nan Zhang	Wyatt Hall
Ashley B Hixson	Jeremy Gombin-Sperling	Nicole Halat	Yu Chen
Beatrix Randolph	Joana Granados	Nicole Mejia	Chelsea Stolt
Benjamin Rickles	John Chi	Patrick Sheehan	Hannah Sanders
Blake O'Neal Turner	Julianne van Meerten	Pearl Lo	Adam Klager
Diksha Bali	Katherine Luken Raz	Rachel Ghosh	Emily Bernstein
Eden M. Rivera	Kathryn Yee	Sara Gliese	Erin Sorensen
Emmanuel Wanjala	Kavitha Kasargod-Staub	Sarah Kilmer	Katelyn Williams
Genevieve D'Cruz	Langan Courtney	Shakia Asamoah	Leyla Babaturk
Hailey Fleece	Lindsey Allen	Sharon Alexa McDorman	Amanda Dennis

Hailey Gibbs	Marissa Rose Sariol-Clough	Sonya Park	Karen Feagin
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College of Information Studies

Alia Reza	Jacob Hopkins	Nate Beard	Shawn Janzen
Daniel Greene	Jennifer Proctor	Nitzan Koren	Sunyup Park
Emery Laurel Patterson	Joana Stillwell	Priya Kumar	Sydney Mariel Triola
Emily Frazier	Jonathan Brier	Rachel Wood	Tricia Glaser
Hayleigh Brianna Moore	Kayla Winbush	Robin Reiss	William Aidan Kraft
J Nicole Miller	Marilyn Patricia Iriarte Santacruz	S. Nisa Asgarali-Hoffman	Genevieve Kocienda
Jack Owen	Maureen Jones	Sarah Anderson	Anup Sathya
Srinidhi Nag			

Philip Merrill College of Journalism

Jaime Williams	Kara Newhouse	Keegan Clements-Housser	Molly Work
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Robert H. Smith School of Business

Alexis Marlease Holland	Daylin Russo	Katarina Slobodova	Ramana Sriwidya
Beverly Kariuki	Elana Marmorstein	Monis Rehan Khan	Ronaldo Moscoso
ChungHao Lee	Jinyoung Sohn	Myriam Cisse	Sammy H
Courtney DiStefano	Jordan Bryant	Pooja Deb	Stevan Sunny Thomas
Jillian Cordial	Burhan Channiwala		

School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation

Andrew Joseph Mazer	Devon Murtha	Melanie Marino	Upasana Kaku
Bi'Anncha Andrews	Katherine McClure	Nohely Alvarez	Will Bien Duggan
Bridget Kerner	Kenny Turscak	Rachael Warner	Stefan Woehlke
Carter Reitman	Lilian Murnen	Ryan Muir	

School of Public Health

Aaliyah Robertson	Deborah Lyn Bors	Maisha Huq	Shakiba Rafiee
Ahlam Majadly	Elle Pope	Michele E Morgado	Sofi Martinez

Alexandra Simione	Gina Garcia	Michelle Jasczynski	Surayyah Khan
Amanda Ng	Jennifer Robinson	Molly Lutrey	Surayyah Khan
Anna Posbergh	Jessica M. Keralis	Natasha Williams	Tori Alexis Thompson
Anna Posbergh	Juliana Munoz	Portia Buchongo	Yiming Chen
Casey Ottenwaelder	Katherine Tomlinson	Rajrupa Ghosh	Ndifreke Ikpe
Charlene Kuo	Krystle McConnell	Rya Griffis	Marque Long
Christopher Williams	Lauren Eagan	Salwa Shan	Soomin Ryu
Colleen Berk	Leslie S. Jordan	Samantha Lee Griffin	

School of Public Policy

Aisac Accad	Emily Darnell	Lindsay Rand	Roohia Meer
Austin Lee	Enwongo Ekah	Michael Hamberger	Saleha Waqar
Brinda Yarlagadda	Holly Gregory	Miranda Baxter	Samantha Anne Porzel
Calista Struby	Jasmine Braxton	Paden Tranter	Sergio Tiago Barreiras Pereira Pinto
Carolina Azcuña	John O'Neill	Patrick D Carroll	Sergio Tiago Pinto
Charles Weissfellner	Jose Munne Caceres	Paul B. Ellis	Tyra Reed
Ella Clarke	Lauren Samuelsen	Rodrigo Deiana	Jacquelyn Smith
Elizabeth Colin			

Other

Shivam Shukla	Bharat Prakash	Jared Hand	Sydney Roberts
Adelaida Shelley	Casey Doyle	Justin R Metcalf-Burton	Tammy Page
Onat Arisoy	Cynthia Frezzo	Lisong Chen	Ali Abdolrahmani
Calvin Osinga	Dani Glenn	Lydia Stamato	Rhiannon Vaughn
Alan Pearl	Danny Doucette	Malcolm Jardine	Antonya Huntensburg
Alexander Yurcaba	David Setton	Nicholas B Suarez	Beth Guay
Anthony Barnes	Sharona Ginsberg	Norma Kline	

victoria.ledford.pdf

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Position: FAV

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

SB 521
Supporting

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

Simply put, prohibiting graduate student employee's collective bargaining rights is an outdated and inequitable practice that does not reflect the values of the state of Maryland or the universities within it. Our state, and our country at large, purport to protect laborers—instituting protections for vulnerable groups (such as children), and making clear anti-discrimination practices. Furthermore, in the U.S., employees of the state must be granted certain rights, including the right to collectively bargain.

How, then, is it sensible to exclude graduate assistants from fair labor standards? My paycheck lists me as an employee. I have subsidized health insurance as an employee. I am paid as an employee. And yet, I am not protected as an employee.

This outdated practice excuses inequity by exploiting the precarious position graduate assistant employees already face: to be both student and employee of the university.

This position should not justify the prohibition of collective bargaining but should make necessary the immense need to protect an already vulnerable population. The minimum required stipend for graduate students at the University of Maryland is nearly 50% lower than the cost of living for a single adult living near College Park, Maryland. We rest at the bottom of the totem pole compared to all other Big 10 Universities.

And yet, we find ourselves at risk and unprotected by labor standards guaranteed to state employees.

The great state of Maryland values its workers, and I believe that most of our legislators want to uphold fair labor standards. If my belief is correctly placed in my representatives, the only logical next step to pass this policy guaranteeing graduate assistant employees like me collective bargaining rights.

It is high time our state policy aligns with our values of fair labor standards for graduate student employees.

Sincerely,

Victoria Ledford

ABD Doctoral Candidate of Communication, Instructor of Record, Graduate Research &
Teaching Assistant, Department of Communication

University of Maryland, College Park

2130 Skinner Building, Department of Communication, University of Maryland, College Park,
MD 20742

wujoo.daniel.lee.pdf

Uploaded by: LEE, Wu-Joo Daniel

Position: FAV

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

SB 521
Supporting

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

The average living cost in college park area is much higher than I expected. The rent is so high and therefore paying for my living space is burdensome considering the current stipend rate. To prevent any unwanted distracting caused by low income but high living cost, I definitely agree that the financial aid for graduate assistants should be increased.

Sincerely,

Wu-Joo Daniel Lee
University of Maryland, College Park
3209A Marie Mount Hall, University of Maryland, College Park, MD 20742
wjlee1@umd.edu

jesse.moy.leong.pdf

Uploaded by: Leong, Jesse Moy

Position: FAV

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

SB 521
Supporting

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

The university and school fees should be deducted from the GA salary. Having it as added salary is hundreds or thousands of dollars in additional taxable income that must go right back to the university. Also, having half GAs only get half tuition waivers is rare amongst universities and should be changed.

Sincerely,

Jesse Moy Leong
Graduate Assistant, Music
University of Maryland, College Park
7525 Riverdale Road, Apt 1813, New Carrollton, MD 20784
jmleongmusic@gmail.com

shuke.li.pdf

Uploaded by: Li, Shuke

Position: FAV

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

SB 521
Supporting

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

I believe the graduate assistants' salaries in University of Maryland system deserve a raise considering the hard work and high living expenses around DC. Also, although PhD students like me get a stipend for the tuition and living expenses, we still end up paying international student fee, mandatory fee and part of insurance every semester, which is an extra \$1000 bill.

Sincerely,

Shuke Li
Graduate Assistant
University of Maryland, College Park
3404 Tulane Dr, Apt 13, Hyattsville, MD 20783

bianca.licitra.pdf

Uploaded by: Licitra, Bianca

Position: FAV

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

SB 521
Supporting

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

Graduate assistants are not paid a living wage. Most of us are working over 40 hours a week if you combine the time we are in our own classes, teaching/working, meeting with students, grading, and studying/researching. Most of my peers spend a majority of their stipend on rent with little additional leftover for other living costs. This is unfair and dangerous considering the baseline stresses associated with graduate school. We should be able to feel comfortable and safe. Unionizing will allow us to lobby for increased wages.

Sincerely,

Bianca Licitra
Graduate Assistant, English
University of Maryland, College Park
1450 Newton St NW, Washington , D.C 20010
Bianca.licitra97@gmail.com

siv.b.lie.pdf

Uploaded by: Lie, Siv B.

Position: FAV

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

SB 521
Supporting

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

As a supervisor of graduate teaching assistants and as an advisor to graduate students, I strongly believe that graduate students should have the right to collectively bargain. They deserve the same rights as other university workers, as they are providing labor essential to the university's operations.

Sincerely,

Siv B. Lie
Faculty, School of Music
University of Maryland, College Park
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sivblie@gmail.com

xiaomin.lin.pdf

Uploaded by: Lin, Xiaomin

Position: FAV

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

SB 521
Supporting

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

From last year, I only have \$15000 after tax to spend. And more than half of it have been contributing to my rent. There is really minimum, minimum money for us to spend on our daily expense. We have been living a life as a minimum wage person in the Maryland let alone the fact that I have a house-wife that I have to feed during the pandemic. I really wish we could get more support from the government level. As a Marylander, I have been paying my tax on time, I do wish there is some help, any help from the government level to us graduate assistant. I have seen so much Ph.D. student leaving their study for work, because it is really hard to sustain their life on campus.

Sincerely,

Xiaomin Lin
Teaching Assistant, Electrical and Computer Engineering.
University of Maryland, College Park
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luuckiest@gmail.com

zipei.lu.pdf

Uploaded by: Lu, Zipei

Position: FAV

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

SB 521
Supporting

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

Employees should have rights to bargain for what they believe they deserve. Being a student or working for a state-owned institute does not make it an exception. Employers should listen to their employees' voices, not only for the well-being of employees, but also for their own sake. Because working efficiency, especially for creative types of work, comes from satisfying working conditions. I believe what the University of Maryland has done in building a healthy relationship between the school and GAs are far from satisfying. I heard complains about low salaries and high home rent in the DC area. Our mandatory fees, which a lot of schools do not have, are not included in the tuition remission. That means over \$1,600 a year if you register for over 8 credits every semester (which is a requirement in our department). I could hardly make ends meet at the beginning of every semester. Life as a PhD student is stressful, and financial burdens make the experience worse. As an International student, there are much less financial aids for us as most of them only target domestic students. Without bargaining rights, there is no way but silently suffer or just, leave. Many of the essential work in the school are done by GAs. University of Maryland has always been seeking to provide high quality teaching, part of which is provided or supported by GAs. Our research ranking achieves the highest in the history, which cannot be achieved without those hard working research assistants. If high quality education and research are still of high priority in the university, the voice of the GAs should be heard, to enlarge our community, and to make every one of us comfortably work towards a higher goal.

Sincerely,

Zipei Lu
Graduate Assistant
University of Maryland, College Park
3330 Van Munching Hall, College Park, MD 20742

naren.manjunath.pdf

Uploaded by: Manjunath, Naren

Position: FAV

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

SB 521
Supporting

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

I have been a PhD student at UMD for 7 full semesters now. I was a TA for 3 semesters and an RA for the other 4. Each TA session involved teaching 2 groups of 25 students each. I was required to lead 2 lab sessions each week- a total of 6 in-person hours- and grade lab reports, sit in office hours, as well as attend lab prep meetings weekly. On occasion, I would also be asked to substitute for other TAs or faculty members who were unavailable.

Although I was paid during these semesters to be a TA, I would describe this work as filling only about half of my allotted time at work. Every TA in my department also has to make progress in their research, and (in the initial few years) take several courses in their research specialization. So there are a lot of responsibilities, and they are not mutually reinforcing. It is very difficult for a TA to ask a potential advisor for more time to complete a research task because they have to spend all night grading exams or lab reports for the class they are teaching. On the other hand, if their advisor decides to terminate their position in the group for any reason, or withdraws advisory support, there is nothing a TA can do about it. TAs are dependent on advisory support not only for career advancement (and that dependence is almost complete), but also for things like maternity leave and childcare leave.

Given how much TAs and RAs contribute to the academic program at UMD, having some form of collective bargaining agreement to provide basic worker protections is the least that should be available to grad students

Sincerely,

Naren Manjunath

PhD, Department of Physics

bayley.j.marquez.pdf

Uploaded by: Marquez, Bayley J.

Position: FAV

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

SB 521
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 521. 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. 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 our undergraduate degree program would not be able to function.

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.
Assistant Professor of American Studies
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elizabeth.massey.pdf

Uploaded by: Massey, Elizabeth

Position: FAV

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

SB 521
Supporting

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

I support legalizing collective bargaining rights for graduate employees within Maryland so that we can be recognized and have the potential to negotiate as full employees. Without this recognition, without any formal seat at the table, policies about graduate student employment are vague.

Vague policies such as, for example, leaving parental accommodation decisions up to “department culture” are not policies at all. At best, these “policies” leave students to negotiate their status themselves with those who control their academic and early professional career; at worst, they leave students open to discrimination because of precedent set by “department culture” that is not rooted in equality and inclusion. When pregnant with my first child, for example, I received derogatory comments (fortunately, not from my advisor!). As the first woman graduate Teaching Assistant to give birth during the semester, my department had no “department culture,” and--especially after hearing these insulting and utterly degrading questions--I battled extreme anxiety as I worked with my department to shape my accommodation plan on my own. Fortunately, my individual advisor was kind and understanding, but he was at a loss of how to accommodate the many unknowns of birth and infant care within the bureaucratic layers of the undergraduate courses that graduate students in my department teach. When I contacted the University’s ombudsman, his lack of empathy and lack of knowledge about what employment options were available in my department quickly revealed that rather than a helpful resource, conversations with him were a further emotional drain and, more practically, a waste of precious time.

Like so many other systemic problems, the current COVID-19 pandemic has revealed the inequity present in vague policies for graduate students--these vague policies create and perpetuate a culture in which graduate student workers are not provided essential resources to complete their work and their own studies/research, our two primary functions at universities. For my Teaching Assistant position during Fall 2020, I was the sole TA for an upper-level

undergraduate course. I have two children: one was 2 at the start of Fall 2020, one was 6 months old. My baby's sitter unfortunately tested positive for COVID-19 in the second week of the semester; this news and the need to immediately begin quarantine meant we had to pull our eldest from her daycare center, which subsequently closed when my children and I tested positive. My husband and I, then, faced battling this disease within our family and caring for two young children who need constant supervision for at least two weeks while also both trying to sustain our work.

We quickly realized that in reality, the FFCRA was not so helpful; it would have allowed my husband (who had just begun a new job 1 week earlier) up to a maximum 80 hours of PTO, and myself a maximum of 40 hours. These finite numbers are not helpful because (1) your quarantine may be extended, as ours was, due to the onset date and nature of your symptoms, (2) it does not consider the continued closure of any child care center--our eldest's daycare center remained closed even after our quarantine ended, because of the different dates of exposure. As we began our quarantine, we were hesitant to use these finite hours too quickly, lest we run out and still be sick and/or without childcare.

As a graduate employee, I am afforded "time away," per the [Graduate Handbook](#). I take seriously my responsibility as a teacher--the job for which I am paid--and I am devoted to my students. As the sole TA for this course, I knew that taking formal "time away" would have a severe, negative impact on their learning, in an already tumultuous semester of online learning. As the sole TA for this course, what did "time away" mean? How was my work to be distributed? Who would do it? Who was allowed to do it? (In my department, not all are eligible to be the TA for upper-level/major-required courses.) The lead professor of the course, an adjunct, did not know...but neither did the division chair, nor members of my department's administration. On my end, as I was thrown into quarantine, battled COVID, and sought to provide my family and myself with healthful, immune-boosting meals (something that takes time and great coordination with helpful friends and family), I frankly did not have the hours, mental stability, or emotional capacity to figure out what even my department's administration did not know: the "red tape" of what "time away" meant for me, my students, and the course in this situation. I tried to stay on top of email, be available on Zoom for the required sessions, and

simply survive. The result was that I got behind on other teaching responsibilities and was not “caught up” until mid-December; for my students, my COVID quarantine and diagnosis meant delayed and reduced feedback the entire semester. Furthermore, this experience prevented me from completing my own research and making progress on my dissertation for the remainder of the calendar year.

While COVID19 is a new--and I hope unique--situation, the phenomena of graduate student employees contracting an illness certainly is not. And yet, there are no guidelines provided to professors or departmental administrators for examples, regulations, etc. of how to handle graduate employee “time away.” My lead professor was provided with no resources, and those above her were also totally unprepared for how to provide assistance to a course without multiple TAs assigned to it. As with so many things, the pandemic has served to highlight a crucial structural flaw: not having clear policies of how “time away” may be handled for different funding situations creates impossible situations not just for students, but also for faculty and administrators.

Having the right to collective bargaining will *in itself* help to amplify and strengthen graduate student voices. University administrations will be more encouraged to make real, meaningful adjustments for graduate student employees when we have this right, even before a union is created (if one ever is). I hope you join our efforts to make possible a brighter, more equitable education system and future for us and our children.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Massey
Musicology, School of Music
Teaching Assistant, PhD Candidate
4906 Riverdale Road
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elizabeth.d.massey@gmail.com

michelle.mazurek.pdf

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Position: FAV

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

SB 521
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, I interact with graduate students every day as my students, my mentees, my research assistants, my teaching assistants, my colleagues, and my friends. Without graduate student employees, I simply could not accomplish my research and teaching goals. Graduate students do much of the work that supports the hundreds of millions of dollars of external research funding the university receives each year, and much of the work that leads to the research breakthroughs and awards that the university is justifiably proud of. Graduate students also do much of the work that allows the computer science department to scale up the undergraduate curriculum to support continually increasing enrollment, even while the number of faculty available to teach classes in the department has not increased.

However, graduate students are not treated and compensated in accordance with their critical role in university life. Our best-paid graduate students in computer science receive about \$27,000 per year, which is significantly below the living wage in Prince George's County and significantly less than in many graduate programs, even those in locations where the cost of living is substantially lower than here in Maryland. In fact, it is comparable to the salary I received as a graduate student more than 10 years ago, in a much less expensive location. Empowering graduate students to negotiate for living wages -- and for compensation commensurate to their enormous contributions to the university -- is the right thing to do for the students, but it will also improve the university's ability to attract the best and brightest new students.

Salaries are not the only important issue for graduate students. Our traineeship model for PhD students has many wonderful benefits, including the ability to build close working relationships, as well as lifelong collaborations, between advisers and advisees. But it also creates structural risks of exploitation, because advisers have significant power over their students and few checks on their authority. Empowering graduate students to negotiate working conditions will add equity to that relationship and ensure that graduate students are treated as the valuable employees they are. This balance can help to ensure that a good-faith mentor-mentee relationship can thrive.

Graduate students are at the heart of the university. I strongly support their right to collectively bargain, enabling them to protect their rights and build the kind of security that can springboard long-term success. SB521 is not only the ethically correct choice, but also the practically correct choice, to maintain and increase the long-term strength of the university, and I strongly urge you to support it.

Sincerely,

Michelle L. Mazurek, PhD

Associate Professor, Computer Science and UMIACS, University of Maryland

5236 Bredan Iribe Center

College Park, MD 20742

mmazurek@gmail.com

junaid.merchant.pdf

Uploaded by: Merchant, Junaid

Position: FAV

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

SB 521
Supporting

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

I am a third year PhD student in the Neuroscience and Cognitive Science (NACS) program at University of Maryland, College Park, and I am writing to you in support of SB521 – granting collective bargaining rights to graduate students of the University of Maryland system. University of Maryland has an exceptional record in science innovation, and I am very grateful to be part of this scientific community, but it is necessary to acknowledge that the backbone of this exceptionalism comes from the hard work of graduate researchers and teaching assistants. By being denied a seat at the table when it comes to policies impacting graduate students, the state is telling its indispensable graduate students that they are not valued.

During my time at UMD, I have made significant contributions to two different R01 grants from the National Institutes of Health (NIH), which have brought millions of dollars to the university. Through this work, I also provided pilot data that enabled our lab to recently be awarded another R01. Moreover, I have spent countless hours training undergrads in neuroimaging methods, which has served to augment the education they received through their classwork. Despite my contributions to UMD's exceptionalism, my graduate stipend has remained under the NIH standard, which is meager for the cost of living in the area. Giving collective bargaining rights to graduate students would facilitate more equitable solutions for everyone at the university.

On a personal note, I am step-father to two elementary school aged children who are simultaneously in awe of the work that I do, yet negatively impacted by the financial cost that graduate school has had on our family. Little things like mandatory fees due each semester slowly eat away at our ability to live comfortably. While I am not expecting professional level pay, I would like the means to voice my frustrations about such policies that the administration is likely unaware of. Opening up dialogue between the policy makers and the graduate students who are impacted by these policies will only serve to improve the university overall. I truly hope that you take a proactive approach in recognizing graduate student workers as workers, and pass the SB521 collective bargaining bill.

Sincerely,

Junaid S Merchant, MS
PhD Student in Neuroscience and Cognitive Science (NACS)
Research Assistant, Psychology Department
13276 Musicmaster Dr, Silver Spring MD 20904
merchantjs@gmail.com

alexander.w.miller.pdf

Uploaded by: Miller, Alexander W

Position: FAV

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

SB 521
Supporting

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

My department has faced strong criticism over the inequity in graduate assistantship assignments. Some graduate students have been given much easier workloads in comparison to others without much transparency of how these assignments were given or additional compensation for those with larger workloads. Furthermore, the hiring freeze brought on by COVID-19 has placed the department in dire straits with regard to professorial labor. There are now fewer full time professors than ever and there is no chance to replace those who have left. This has placed a disproportionate amount of the undergraduate teaching labor on graduate students, who have little say in negotiating their contracts to account for this additional responsibility.

Sincerely,

Alexander W Miller
Graduate Student, Department of Theatre, Dance, and Performance Studies
University of Maryland, College Park
8154 Miner Street, Greenbelt, MD 20770
alexwmiller@mac.com

eli.mizrachi.pdf

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 521
Supporting

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

Our institutions take pride in their democratic values. This is plainly evident at the University of Maryland, where heartfelt slogans are emblazoned on the sides of buses and banners all across campus. Personally, I cannot imagine how these values would conflict with the right of workers to band together and ensure that each of them is treated in accordance with their needs.

And yet--this right is explicitly withheld from us, making the case that our ideals are as valuable as the banners and stickers they're printed on.

To expand on this, while a graduate assistantship is merely a stepping stone in our careers, it is oftentimes characterized as a labor of love. But love does not pay rent, nor does it pay for food. Furthermore, the lack of formal protections generates anxiety, stress, and depression disproportionate levels in graduate students¹. Simply put, an abstract satisfaction with our labor is not an acceptable substitute for the safety that collective bargaining rights would provide.

I look forward to this matter being taken seriously, and I would like to stress that it isn't one of charity--it is one of necessity. The extensive hours that we provide in highly skilled labor are critical for the functioning of millions of dollars' worth of ongoing research projects, undergraduate classes, and labs. These functions are what make academia one of many pillars our society depends on, but it would crumble without us, much like it would without other workers.

Finally, I'd like to conclude by noting that begging is not a dignified act, let alone begging for rights which other people enjoy. Even so, this is the third year in a row that I am begging for a seat at the table with my fellow workers, where we do not have to beg, but can instead collectively bargain as equals.

Sincerely,

Eli Mizrachi
PhD Candidate, Department of Physics
Research Assistant
2127 Physical Sciences Complex, College Park, MD 20742
emiz@umd.edu

¹ <https://ter.ps/mhreport2018>: UMD 2018 Physics Mental Health Survey

johnny.monday.pdf

Uploaded by: Monday, Johnny

Position: FAV

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

SB 521
Supporting

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

I support collective bargaining rights. The state of academia is extremely precarious for Graduate Students right now. We are not adequately paid for the tremendous amount of work that we put in and we are not guaranteed support by anybody except by our employer which is a tenuous relationship at best. We have no power right now and there is power in a union.

Sincerely,

Johnny Monday
Graduate Assistant, Department of Theatre and Performance Studies
University of Maryland, College Park
1811 Metzerott Rd, Adelphi, MD 20783
mondayjf409@gmail.com

hayleigh.brianne.moore.pdf

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Position: FAV

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

SB 521
Supporting

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

While we are students first, GAs drive the success of the academic, financial, research, and social goals established by their respective university. This bill can help amplify the voices of GAs who are supporting their university communities, while helping GAs to feel more empowered to contribute more to those communities without having their concerns be overshadowed or not acknowledged properly.

Sincerely,

Hayleigh Brianne Moore
Graduate Assistant
University of Maryland, College Park
12401 Brickyard Blvd, Beltsville, MD 20705
hayleighbmoore@gmail.com

jose.munne.pdf

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Position: FAV

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

SB 521
Supporting

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

I write to you today in full support of Senate Bill 0521, also known as the Graduate Assistant Collective Bargaining Fairness Act.

As a second-year Master of Public Policy student at the School of Public Policy, I am very interested in the current implications of past policy and the potential solutions we can offer, especially when their effects loom so heavily over myself and those like me.

Not only am I a proud graduate student at the University of Maryland, but I am also a proud international student from the Dominican Republic, and although the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent economic recession have affected us all in numerous ways, I would like to take some of your valuable time to explain how international students have fared particularly negatively throughout the past year.

First, I must express my gratitude to the University of Maryland, and its School of Public Policy in particular, for granting me the opportunity to pursue my higher education at such a prestigious institution. In addition, it is necessary to acknowledge the privilege that such an opportunity carries, knowing that thousands—if not millions—around the world can only wish to be in my shoes.

That being said, however, my current position, which I came so grateful to be in, comes with a specific set of inherent strings attached, which in times of crisis, can be particularly taxing. For example, unlike most graduate students, whether student worker or not, international students are unable to seek full-time employment, and only under certain conditions, and after an application and approval process, can we seek part-time employment outside of our academic institutions. As you know, the current recession has caused a considerable decrease in supply in the job market, making difficult for anybody seeking to support themselves, and perhaps their families, to find employment. This situation is only made worse for international students who cannot seek employment freely.

As part of the federal government's actions to alleviate the strain of the pandemic and recession on our lives, last March Congress passed the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act or CARES Act, a stimulus bill worth over \$2 trillion dollars. Part of the CARES Act distributed funds to institutions, like the University of Maryland, which their students could then access; students, that is, who were not international.

Additionally, the CARES Act, also provided individuals with \$1,200 in stimulus, not including many international students, especially those who came to the United States in 2020, and, therefore, had not paid taxes in 2019. The same can also be said of the second round of federal stimulus, which included \$600 for individuals.

This is not only an issue of workers' rights, but one of looking out for the most vulnerable, those without representation, without the tools available to others to conduct change, but with the same needs as everybody else.

Keeping this in mind, it is of the utmost importance for graduate student workers within the University System of Maryland, especially international students, to be represented, advocated for, and, when necessary, have the ability to bargain collectively, seeing as our options are already slim to begin with.

Therefore, this is why I urge you to support Senate Bill 0521 in order for graduate workers to be classified as workers and grant us the right, not privilege, to advocate for ourselves, including through collective bargaining.

Sincerely,

Jose M. Munne

Candidate, School of Public Policy

Teaching Assistant

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xuesen.na.pdf

Uploaded by: Na, Xuesen

Position: FAV

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

SB 521
Supporting

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

I strongly support the status of graduate workers to be classified as employees and the collective bargaining rights that comes with it. The most important task of a graduate student should always be his/her coursework and thesis research. A graduate assistantship is often the only source of income supporting this crucial period of career development.

I speak as an international student at the Dept. of Mathematics at the University of Maryland. The vast majority of graduate students in our program rely solely on the income from teaching assistantship to be able to afford rent among other living costs in College Park. The COVID-19 pandemic has greatly complicated the work condition even with teaching completely online. The online environment has increased the teaching load significantly, both in adjustment to new platforms and format, and an increasing amount of assignments and greater responsibility to engage the students in the online setting. Furthermore, the graduate students are often not themselves the sole instructor, they are subject to long and frequent class meetings at the requirement of lecturers and course chairs. Without collective bargaining rights, the department will never put graduate students in any sort of priority, the graduate assistants are at the mercy of arbitrarily varying workload and unclear specification of responsibilities.

The lack of control on teaching workload have also enabled the university to hire much less GAs with lower salary compared to many other public universities. Recently the Dept. of Mathematics have implemented sudden changed the policy on support for those who have been in program for 7+ years (average length of degree is actually 6.5 years in MATH). This cruel and arbitrary decision in the middle of a global pandemic jeopardized my own assistantship position and several of my colleagues have lost their support.

Sincerely,

Xuesen Na
Graduate Assistant, Department of Mathematics
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amanda.ng.pdf

Uploaded by: Ng, Amanda

Position: FAV

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

SB 521
Supporting

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

I am a doctoral student and graduate teaching assistant at the University of Maryland. I write to you today to request your support for collective bargaining for graduate students at UMD.

Despite significant contributions to the university, graduate students are often taken advantage of and treated unfairly in the workplace because we lack the collective power to negotiate for fair terms. As a graduate teaching assistant, I interact with up to 200 students per semester; these duties include teaching in my own classroom, holding office hours, grading homeworks, assignments, and exams, and contributing to lesson plans and testing instruments. As a senior TA, I also help manage a team of seven other teaching assistants. During this pandemic, the duties of graduate teaching assistants have expanded to include assisting professors with technology platforms (e.g. Zoom), developing online curriculums, and providing both instrumental and emotional support to our students: all responsibilities which should fall on the course instructor, who is compensated for our additional work. An education at UMD would be severely lacking without the expertise of graduate students.

Regardless of how our responsibilities increase, we are unable to negotiate an increase in pay or benefits. There have also been several occasions (experienced by myself and others) where our departments have verbally miscommunicated information about pay and benefits to graduate students, and expected us to continue our teaching responsibilities without clear terms. Teaching without written contracts means that our financial circumstances depends solely on the trust between a department and its students: a trust which has been violated several times in the past. There are no repercussions for these actions because graduate students have little to no power without a faculty member that sympathizes with them.

With the passing of collective bargaining for graduate students, the Maryland legislature has the power to change the circumstances of thousands of graduate students. This right will improve working conditions for graduate students at the University of Maryland, and show that the state does value our significant contributions to the state university system.

Sincerely,

Amanda E. Ng, MPH
PhD Student, Department of Epidemiology
Graduate Teaching Assistant

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custodio.de.oliveira.nunes.pdf

Uploaded by: Nunes, Custodio de Oliveira

Position: FAV

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

SB 521
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.

We, graduate students, deserve the right to organize as any other employees and this should be enough, but it hasn't been in the past many years and I will try to follow with some arguments that we should take into account.

Graduate students are an incredible high skilled work force in this country, making universities work the way they do. However, grad students recognition is below anything that I've experienced.

We do not have fixed work hours, we are supposed to work whenever our adviser tells us to, none of the extra hours or night shifts are paid because we live in the false pretense that science should be a work for the ones that really want this in their lives, despite having no reassurance that this will be our future (because no matter how hard we work, a position as a professor or a tenure are never guaranteed). And yet we are the work force that gives prestige and recognition to our University.

In our duties we are supposed to teach, to run experiments in the lab, to write papers and in the meantime advance with our dissertation - our own project. But the conditions we have when we start grad school are far from optimal and I start with the most striking one.

Our payment.

We have to choose to live in houses that are not friendly to a working environment just because it is cheaper, or just because we want to have a car and need that money for car insurance or because we have student debt that needs to be paid. We have to lose ourselves in financial adjustments and to figure out how many meals out we can have because the money might not be enough until the end of the month. Why don't we cook it ourselves? We wish we could do it all the time but unfortunately the late nights at work sometimes do not allow the time to do it. We often live in decrepit houses just to have enough money to travel somewhere at a certain time of the year. And talking about traveling, we often do not have any vacation stipulated in our rights. This is something that we have to manage with our adviser under no contract or vacations days. and When we do, we are often bound to money constraints because we can't even rent a car for a full week.

I am an international student which means that I like to go see my family at least once a year, but in the first 3 years here, those visits could only happen if and only my family paid for my trip because I couldn't save enough money.

These are the struggles of being a grad student and I am afraid that this is a burden that is too big

to carry for many of us. The negative view surrounding Grad School is dire, and often perceived as a terrible choice in life, instead of being something to be proud of, something to be grateful that we can do our work in an intellectual environment of learning and growth.

We deserve to be heard, we deserve to have our rights in contracts that protects us from our superiors and more than that, we deserve to be paid accordingly to the work that we do.

We deserve the right to organize, so that we could secure workplace protections in all forms : from sexual harassment, abuse, and retribution for raising concerns --- that ensure safe working environments.

Sincerely,

Custodio de Oliveira Nunes
Graduate Assistant, CBMG
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kari.nye.pdf

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 521
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 521 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
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kathleen.e.oppenheimer.pdf

Uploaded by: Oppenheimer, Kathleen E.

Position: FAV

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

SB 521
Supporting

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

I am writing in support of SB 521 regarding collective bargaining rights for state personnel. I am a PhD student at the University of Maryland. As a graduate assistant, I take courses and pursue my own independent research projects, while also working on research projects for my advisors to satisfy the requirements of my funding. I am also expected to attend conferences and submit my own work to conferences and journals. I supervise undergraduate research assistants, mentor an undergraduate writing an honors thesis, and support undergraduates as they apply to graduate school. The work my fellow GAs and I contribute to our labs, departments, and the university is vital to the functioning of the university. Graduate students fortunate enough to secure their own funding (thus obviating the need for a GA position) lose access to the employee health insurance, which many students (myself included) rely on to support their families.

I have been fortunate enough to have very supportive advisors. This is not the case for all students. A GA's employment supervisor is often also their academic advisor. That means that in the event of an employment dispute about the GA's work, their only recourse is to talk to their advisor, whose support is crucial to the student's advancement in the degree program and their post-graduate employment success. Escalating a dispute beyond the advisor risks damaging the advisor-student relationship, putting the grad student's success in jeopardy.

As a new parent, I have been disappointed in the university's lack of support for graduate student parents. The current parental accommodation policy provides six weeks of "reasonable and appropriate" accommodations. This is an oxymoron, as six weeks is neither reasonable nor appropriate, especially since the nature of these accommodations is left up for the student to discuss with their advisor. The university recently opened a new childcare center, but tuition for the infant classroom is almost \$2,000 per month, with no scholarships or discounts for students. That's more than 80% of what I make.

Collective bargaining would give graduate students the ability to negotiate fair wages and employment policies so that they can be more effective students, researchers, mentors, and instructors. We need to be able to advocate for university-wide policies to protect all student workers. Student parents should be eligible for parental leave that is commensurate with that afforded to staff and faculty and we need to be able to bargain collectively in order to achieve these changes.

Sincerely,

Kathleen E. Oppenheimer
Graduate Assistant, Hearing and Speech Sciences
University of Maryland, College Park
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jameson.oreilly.pdf

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 521
Supporting

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

I urge you to support SB 521 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 Candidate, Physics
Research Assistant
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k.sarah.ostrach.pdf

Uploaded by: Ostrach, K. Sarah

Position: FAV

Delores G. Kelley, Chair
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3 East Miller Senate Office Building
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SB 521
Supporting

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

My name is Kraina Sarah E. Ostrach. I graduated from the Master of Library Science (MLIS) program with the College of Information Studies at the University of Maryland, College Park in May 2020. 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 burned myself on my way to work and ignored the injury, still trying to arrive on time. As I walked from my car, it became obvious I needed medical attention and could not perform my duties. 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

Graduate Assistant 2018-2019

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emery.patterson.pdf

Uploaded by: Patterson, Emery

Position: FAV

Delores G. Kelley, Chair
Brian J. Feldman, Vice Chair
3 East Miller Senate Office Building
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SB 521
Supporting

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

My name is Emery Laurel Patterson. I am a graduate assistant with the University of Maryland Library system, and I am in my final semester of the MLIS program. I am also the GA staff representative for the Library Assembly Advisory Council (LAAC) for the 2020-2021 academic year.

As a graduate assistant, I had a generally positive experience because my supervisor for most of my program, Bria Parker, was an excellent mentor. My current supervisors, who I began reporting to after Bria's departure, Sarah Hovde and Neil Manel Frau-Cortes, are both very supportive and helpful as well. This experience, however, was dependent upon the goodwill of my colleagues. I was lucky in that the people I worked with were understanding, communicative, and helpful the entire time throughout my graduate assistantship (especially during such a tumultuous time socially).

The needs of GAs are best understood by GAs, because the role tends to vary by department. As workers, we are not treated the same as faculty or staff because of the cyclical nature of the position. Communication is an area that could stand to improve for GAs, as we are often left out of the loop of projects that we are expected to work on.

Because the needs of GAs are best understood by GAs, graduate assistants need bargaining rights. They need the ability to advocate for themselves should the need arise. I am asking for the ability to voice their concerns, just as an option. It should be a tool we have access to.

Sincerely,

Emery L. Patterson
Graduate Assistant
MLIS, College of Information Studies
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ari.perez.pdf

Uploaded by: Perez, Ari

Position: FAV

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

SB 521
Supporting

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

I support this collective bargaining rights because the cost of living continues to go up in the DMV area. This is not seen to be reflected in our teaching assistantships/graduate funding package in terms of what our stipend is. Also when you think about BIPOC having to be overworked because they look towards other means of income it is not right and could ultimately affect their academic success in graduate school because they have financial stressors that they're white colleagues may not have.

Sincerely,

Ari Perez
Graduate Student
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damien.smith.pfister.pdf

Uploaded by: Pfister, Damien Smith

Position: FAV

Delores G. Kelley, Chair
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SB 521
Supporting

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

Graduate students are essential workers. Over the past year, we have lionized the essential workers that make our society function: the grocery store clerks, the delivery people, the frontline health care workers. Although graduate students may not be as essential as these workers during a pandemic, they are essential to the enterprise of the contemporary research university. Indeed, if we see the educational opportunities provided by the University of Maryland as essential to the future success of the state, then we must see the success of graduate students as integral to that success. Graduate students teach tens of thousands of students each semester. They support the research endeavors of faculty, often while pursuing independent research projects of their own. They are both “essential” and “workers,” and thus should have collective bargaining rights like any other worker.

In an ideal world, no worker would need the right to collective bargaining. Everyone who labored on behalf of an institution would be fairly compensated for their work. It goes without saying that we are not living in an ideal world. The University of Maryland, like institutions of higher education across the United States, has been steadily starved of state resources, making it difficult to keep compensation commensurate with our peers and our location, which has seen an obscene surge in rent over the last 20 years. In the absence of adequate stipends and cost of living increases, graduate students are seeking the right to have collective bargaining rights so that they might collectively organize to improve their working conditions. Like most other workers, they should have that right.

It is simply untenable to categorize graduate student workers as workers sometimes, and students other times. They are graduate student workers. We must acknowledge their identities as students, learning a craft, but also as workers, doing the craft. While graduate studies have long been seen as a kind of apprenticeship, we ought not be asking students to live the life of a medieval apprentice. We ought to be thinking of ways to improve their working and living conditions. A good start would be to give them the collective bargaining rights that so many other workers in other industries have.

Sincerely,

Damien Smith Pfister

Associate Professor, Communication
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samantha.anne.porzel.pdf

Uploaded by: Porzel, Samantha Anne

Position: FAV

Delores G. Kelley, Chair
Brian J. Feldman, Vice Chair
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SB 521
Supporting

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

I am a GA at the University of Maryland. I love my school. I love my job. I love my education. And I would not be able to do this without the support of my family, specifically, my father, a retired federal employee and union president. I am incredibly privileged to have the financial support of my father because the graduate stipend IS NOT ENOUGH to live on, let alone pursue a degree.

I have been in my position since August, 2020. In March I was evacuated from the Peace Corps because of COVID. I came back to the U.S. with no job, no health insurance, and no housing. Fortunately, I had already applied and been accepted to UMD. Over the summer I survived on unemployment, my savings, and eventually a retail position.

My first semester, with tuition remission, I used the majority of my savings and Peace Corps settlement (\$7,500) to pay my student bill. This semester, I have had to ask my father to loan me money to cover the cost of my education. I get around \$720 a month from my graduate position. I spend \$300 on rent, leaving \$420 for groceries, car insurance, and everyday necessities.

Graduate students make sacrifice after sacrifice for their education. Right now, we have no one to turn to to advocate for us. Collective bargaining would mean that we are not alone. It would allow all graduate employees the opportunity to be heard. Together, we can pool our resources and create innovative solutions that serve the entire community.

I urge you to pass SB 521 because this is a long overdue measure. We deserve a voice. We deserve recognition. We deserve collective bargaining rights.

Sincerely,

Samantha Anne Porzel
Graduate Assistant
University of Maryland, College Park
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kristopher.pourzal.pdf

Uploaded by: Pourzal, Kristopher

Position: FAV

Delores G. Kelley, Chair
Brian J. Feldman, Vice Chair
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SB 521
Supporting

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

As a graduate student assistant at University of Maryland (UMD), I am writing to you to express my full support of the Fearless Student Employees and ally organizations in our efforts to obtain collective bargaining rights.

The labor of graduate assistants is essential to the daily functioning of the university system. We are a cornerstone of the work that makes UMD enduringly renowned for academic and research excellence. As such, it is vital to the continued success of these institutions that graduate student employees are afforded the most basic of rights that guarantee our safety and security.

The endeavor to secure these rights has been waged for years. The financial precarity wrought by the COVID-19 pandemic serves only to underscore the absolute necessity of these basic protections. It is high time that our ongoing efforts are met with their targeted result, one that carries the wide support of graduate student employees, faculty, and campus groups.

Please demonstrate your commitment to the essential labor of graduate student employees.
Pass SB521 to legalize collective bargaining rights for Maryland's graduate assistants.

Sincerely,

Kristopher Pourzal
Ph.D. Theatre and Performance Studies, School of Theatre, Dance, and Performance Studies
Graduate Assistant
2810 The Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center
University of Maryland, College Park
kpourzal@umd.edu

bharat.prakash.pdf

Uploaded by: Prakash, Bharat

Position: FAV

Delores G. Kelley, Chair
Brian J. Feldman, Vice Chair
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SB 521
Supporting

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

Graduate workers are critical to any research organization/university. They deserve the right to organize and demand for better working conditions and bargain compensations and benefits.

Sincerely,

Bharat Prakash
Research Assistant
University of Maryland, Baltimore County
1812 N Calvert St, Baltimore, Maryland 21202
bhp1@umbc.edu

kyle.pruitt.pdf

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 521
Supporting

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

I demand, for myself and my co-workers, the right to be able to hold an election for the purposes of establishing a collectively bargaining unit like virtually every other state employee.

Sincerely,

Kyle Pruitt
Teaching Assistant, History
University of Maryland, College Park
2844 Saint Paul Street, Apartment 3, Baltimore, MD 21218
kpruitt@terpmail.umd.edu

USMSC_Testimony in Support of SB521.pdf

Uploaded by: Rappeport, Annie

Position: FAV



Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 0521 entitled “State Personnel – Collective Bargaining” at the 2021 Maryland General Assembly

Written Testimony from the University System of Maryland Student Council
February 16, 2021

The University System of Maryland Student Council (USMSC) represents over 172,000 students across 12 higher education institutions and three regional centers. The USMSC works to collectively listen and identify the concerns most relevant to our student constituents. Of perennial importance is the fair and equitable treatment of student employees. Graduate student employees have become an essential part of the workforce at many higher education institutions across the state fulfilling key teaching, research and administrative roles. Unfortunately, the current language in Maryland State law which was introduced in the early 2000s has proven to be very detrimental.

The USMSC members have listened and read student stories and have facilitated a number of cross-campus conversations on the matter which led to overwhelming support for the provisions in SB0521. We heard very clearly why the right needs to be restored because the current meet and confer process is not effective. The meet and confer process is no replacement for a right to have actual collective voice and leverage in situations already rife with disproportionate power dynamics. Often graduate student employees are rendered powerless due to the nature of institutional relationships and their fragile positions whereby their academic progress, income, health insurance and (when applicable) visas are inextricably intertwined with their student jobs/assistantships when advisors and supervisors are one and the same.

Furthermore, SB0521 allows for the flexibility and autonomy wanted by each school to adapt as best fits their needs to the provisions the bill allows. This format the USMSC viewed as a win-win and the best path forward for improving the various campus cultures surrounding the understanding and value of graduate student roles.

We thank Senator Kramer for sponsoring SB0521 which speaks to tangible actions that can relieve some burden on students and their families. We also thank the numerous senators co-sponsoring this bill lending their support for hardworking students who need action to improve their quality of life. We believe that graduate assistants deserve the same basic rights and protections granted to other state employees: a legally-enforceable seat at the table, and a say over their own working conditions. We view this legislation as a necessary action to support our student employees in the state of Maryland.

The USMSC membership voted in overwhelming support of the proposed bill and hope the bill receives a favorable vote in the MGA this year. Thank you for your time and consideration.



Sincerely,

The USMSC Student Council, representing student leadership from:

*Bowie State University
Coppin State University
Frostburg State University
Salisbury University
The Universities at Shady Grove
Towson University
University of Baltimore
University of Maryland, Baltimore
University of Maryland, College Park
University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science
University of Maryland Eastern Shore
University of Maryland Global Campus*

carter.reitman.pdf

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Position: FAV

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

SB 521
Supporting

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

I lived on an assistantship from the UW system in Wisconsin before starting at UMD. Although the cost of living is dramatically higher in Maryland, my assistantship stipend is about the same. The right to bargain will give grad students a much better shot at earning a living wage!

Sincerely,

Carter Reitman
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sophia.relph.pdf

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Position: FAV

Delores G. Kelley, Chair
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SB 521
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Dear Chair Kelley, Vice Chair Feldman, and Members of the Finance Committee,

The University System of Maryland cannot function without the labor of its graduate assistants. They represent an irreplaceable component not only of USM research activities and personnel, but also of undergraduate instruction as well. With their knowledge, expertise, and labor value, graduate assistants are an irreplaceable asset for the University System of Maryland. However, denying them the right to collectively bargain not only disenfranchises them, it also dehumanises them, stripping from them their agency and their ability to fairly negotiate the terms of their employment, a right that the very foundations of labor and capital in the modern world were built on. Now, during the COVID-19 pandemic, this lack of agency is not only financially risky, but represents a real danger to graduate assistants: By denying them full employment status and their right to collective bargaining, the state of Maryland has signalled that these irreplaceable young people are not only undeserving of true employment, but are undeserving of their health and safety. The only ethical choice for the State and University System of Maryland is to allow graduate assistants the right to collective bargaining.

Sincerely,

Sophia Relph
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University of Maryland, College Park
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SB521GradCBrightsBill2021.pdf

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Position: FAV

**Written Testimony from American Federation of Teachers-Maryland
Submitted by Todd Reynolds, Ph.D., Political Coordinator
SB 521 State Personnel – Collective Bargaining
Before the Senate Finance Committee
February 17, 2021**

SUPPORT

Good afternoon Chair Kelley, Vice Chair Feldman and members of the Senate Finance Committee.

My name is Todd Reynolds, and I am the Political Coordinator for the American Federation of Teachers in Maryland. I also previously was the president of the graduate student labor union at the University of Florida, and the lead organizer for the AFT in its campaign to grant grad students collective bargaining rights from 2009-2013. On behalf of the American Federation of Teachers in Maryland, I submit this testimony to call for a favorable report for SB 521, the bill that will grant graduate assistants the right that thousands of graduate assistants enjoy at numerous top-tier universities across the nation—the right to engage in collective bargaining.

Arguments against this fundamental right, largely from University System administration, ignore two key facts: collective bargaining 1) exists for graduate assistants at numerous peer institutions, and 2) also supports, not undercuts, the concept of “shared governance” in our state universities in the United States. At institutions where the academic workers do engage in collective bargaining, they still do have strong structures of shared governance in the form of graduate student councils. Collective bargaining generally deals with conditions of employment, and has legal structures in place to assure agreements are enforceable and disputes are resolved objectively. In issues of employment, collective bargaining is actually a guarantee that university administration will truly share governance with graduate workers in determining how the university will work, not just take grad workers concern under advisement.

Madam chair and members of the committee, we know that collective bargaining works both in Maryland’s public agencies—including the non-academic staff in our universities—and throughout public higher ed institutions in the United States. Of the University of Maryland’s self-identified 5 peer institutions, 4 of them

- UCLA,
- UC Berkeley,
- The University of Michigan, and
- the University of Illinois

have collective bargaining for graduate assistants.

The majority of universities in the Big 10 (including the two mentioned above)

- The University of Minnesota,
- The University of Iowa,
- the University of Wisconsin-Madison,
- Michigan State University,
- Penn State University, and
- Rutgers University

grant collective bargaining rights to graduate assistants, and the majority of top ten public universities in the United States—defined by the 2018 US News and World Report ranking of public universities—have collective bargaining for graduate assistants as well. It is clear that collective bargaining does not harm the academic standing of the university. Most recently, the graduate assistants at Georgetown University in the District of Columbia formed a union and have been bargaining collectively with their administration on a contract that will govern the conditions of employment. As more and more top higher education institutions gain this right, Maryland is in danger of falling behind peer institutions who recognize that graduate employees are doing a significant share of the work of a given college, and should be treated with the respect and dignity that can only come when both labor and management sit down at the bargaining table as equals to draft a collectively-bargained labor contract.

Madam chair and members of the committee, Graduate Assistants do the work of the university by teaching the courses offered to undergrads, and oftentimes doing the research that the University uses to benefit the residents of the state. For these reasons, we ask this committee give a favorable report to SB 521. Thank you.

anne.richardson.pdf

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Position: FAV

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

SB 521
Supporting

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

I have been a Graduate Assistant for 2 years. I have greatly enjoyed my experience as a GA and have been thankful for the boss I have had in my position for being empathetic and meeting the expectations of our work agreements. However, I know that not all GAs are as lucky as I have been and that the graduate student worker position on campus can be fraught with power inequities. I am here to speak up and speak out against UMD's exploitation of student workers. I am here to speak up for our rights as graduate student workers.

Sincerely,

Anne Richardson
Graduate Assistant
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charlotte.rachel.richardsondeppe.pdf

Uploaded by: Richardson-Deppe, Charlotte Rachel

Position: FAV

Delores G. Kelley, Chair
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SB 521
Supporting

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

I am a first-year student pursuing my MFA in Studio Art at the University of Maryland, College Park. I support this campaign because as both contracted workers and full time students, we deserve collective bargaining rights to insure fair and safe treatment in the workplace, negotiation for contracts and stipends, and the right to fight for other benefits and protections as a recognized labor organization.

In the history of student labor organizing, many colleges and university administrations have fought student worker's unions on the basis that students are students, and thus their primary function is to learn, not to work. Yet though we are students, we are also workers and employees of the state of Maryland. For many of us, our stipends and assistantships are our sole income to support ourselves and often to help support our households or family members.

The ability to bargain collectively would grant me and my fellow student-workers greater security in our jobs. I know I would have greater confidence in negotiating my contract and expressing my desire in the areas of conditions, salary, and job protections. I would feel less fear of reprimand or dismissal from my program if I knew my contract was equitably bargained for and not just the matter of internal and administrative decision making. I would love to understand with transparency how state funds are distributed to GAs and other graduate workers. As a state worker of Maryland, I want to be able to collectively bargain for my rights with my peers and unionize should we choose to do so.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, I moved to Maryland to begin grad school. My partner who relocated with me struggled with their job placement in the healthcare field (due to medical scribes being used less in clinical settings during the pandemic), and they were out of work for several months due to this underemployment. During this time, I was in my first semester ever of TA-ing at UMD. I didn't really know my rights as a Graduate Assistant or feel a sense of community with other graduate workers. I paid for all of my household's expenses this fall with my GA salary, which barely covered it—if I did not have even the slight financial safety net that I am lucky to have, I would have had to find other employment to supplement my salary, which would have strongly impeded my success in the MFA program. With collective bargaining in place, I would have had more resources and community to draw on when I struggled, as well as an awareness of options for advocating for more COVID-19 financial protections or an increased salary with the broader graduate student worker community.

Sincerely,

Charlotte Rachel Richardson-Deppe
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gabrielle.robinson-tillenburg.pdf

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SB 521
Supporting

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

As graduate students, Teaching, Administrative, and Research Assistants are in a vulnerable position without collective bargaining rights. While these assistantships provide the necessary tuition support to complete a degree, the rate of pay is not reflective of living costs surrounding the University of Maryland. In College Park and the surrounding areas, it is almost impossible to find rooms or apartments under \$1,000 per month. With the increasing number of luxury student accommodations being constructed surrounding campus and the rapidly expanding DC metro area housing market, rental rates are ever-increasing. Finding a room or apartment at or below this rate is rare and often comes with problems that no one should have to face, and at the very least are not conducive to learning, such as mice or bedbug infestations or mold. Even the official graduate housing apartments are notorious for such issues. At current graduate student salaries, it is unfeasible to afford such rates unless students are receiving outside financial support, such as familial support. It should not need to be stated that not all students have this privilege. Collective bargaining rights would afford all Maryland graduate students the ability to advocate for living wages relative to the area in which they study.

Sincerely,

Gabrielle Robinson-Tillenburg
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Position: FAV

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SB 521
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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.

Sincerely,

Michael Rozowski
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uday.saha.pdf

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Position: FAV

Delores G. Kelley, Chair
Brian J. Feldman, Vice Chair
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SB 521
Supporting

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

I believe that income of graduate assistant should rise to minimize inequality and income deficit.

Sincerely,

Uday Saha
Research Assistant
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chris.samoray.pdf

Uploaded by: Samoray, Chris

Position: FAV

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SB 521
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 play a part in setting the 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 can at times seem 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 who feel backed and heard by their university, making for great success in graduate school. Moreover, much of that graduate student success is a reflection of the 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 in the Big 10, then the University must accept the responsibility of maintaining a professional relationship with graduate student employees. Simply allowing the right to collectively bargain, if students so choose, as dictated in MD SB521, seems incremental progress in a forward-thinking direction in this regard. Thanks to the Committee for consideration of MD SB521.

Sincerely,

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brian.sarginger.pdf

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SB 521
Supporting

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

I am writing in support of SB521 Graduate Assistant Collective Bargaining Fairness Act. I am a PhD candidate in History at the University of Maryland, College Park. During my time here at the university, there have been numerous efforts at trying to try to gain collective bargaining rights for graduate students. I have supported each of these efforts because it is my fundamental belief that workers have the right to organize their workplace to improve their conditions. Graduate students, in addition to being students, are workers. We teach classes, run labs, grade assignments, staff administrative positions, and maintain our library and archival services. Graduate student-workers are often the most forward-facing contacts that students, staff, professors, and visitors have when they are at UMD. Because of the vital role played by graduate student workers, we should have the right to organize and collectively bargain as workers.

When discussing collective bargaining and potential unionization, the focus is often on wages and compensation, but for many, the issue is less with pay than with our working conditions. Collective bargaining would provide an opportunity to create a more equitable and open work environment. For graduate student workers, often their conditions are the product of a vague and ad-hoc set of traditions determined by individual professors or administrators. Even with the introduction of statements of mutual expectations, there are still unresolved problems with respect to their enforcement or if the student-worker has a dispute. Graduate student workers are often placed in a delicate situation where their boss is often an adviser or committee member. This means in a dispute they run the risk of damaging their academic career prospects. They would further have to rely on the broader academic department which may or not choose to advocate for a student over a colleague. Collective bargaining would not end disputes, but it would allow for more formalized means of redress.

In addition to providing a more equitable means of resolving work disputes, collective bargaining would also offer an opportunity to create a more coherent system of compensation. Even beyond disparities between different colleges and fields, within departments there is a lot of opacity and inconsistency regarding compensation for performing the same jobs.

Collective bargaining would also offer other opportunities for graduate student workers to be classified as workers, and not students. Though this shift would feature some drawbacks, overall, the benefits would outweigh the costs. One obvious benefit is that as employees, students would have access to the protections offered through law for workers who become pregnant and need access to family leave. Right now, they are left out of such protections. There are other benefits that would come through being classified as workers, even things like payroll taxes which would incorporate graduate student workers into the welfare system.

Collective bargaining is the right of every worker. It is a practice that exists at our peer institutions in the Big Ten as well as other universities in neighboring states. In a climate in

which all workers are being subjected to greater pressure to perform in difficult circumstances, collective bargaining is a necessary tool to ensure that we are protected from exploitation.

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marissa.sariolclough.pdf

Uploaded by: Sariol-Clough, Marissa

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Delores G. Kelley, Chair
Brian J. Feldman, Vice Chair
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SB 521
Supporting

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

Hello, I would like to begin by saying I enjoy working for the university but did not know when I began that I would not be considered an employee. I moved from another state after finishing my Masters degree, where I worked for the institution while being a student; I was considered an employee at my previous institution. Upon accepting the offer at the University of Maryland to earn my PhD and work for the university while I attended, I was very excited. I assumed that since I was able to get health insurance and received weekly paychecks that I was an employee. I found out the hard way I was not.

Last summer, (2020) I accepted a seasonal position but unfortunately, due to COVID-19, I lost my job. I did not have summer funding from the university or a back-up job and was relying on my summer job to earn one fourth of my income for the year. After losing my job, I applied for unemployment but encountered issue after issue. First off, the Department of Labor and Unemployment was IMPOSSIBLE to reach and when I did speak with someone they had no idea what was wrong or told me something different every time. I applied May 31st, when my role at the university ended, and to this day I have not received a penny from the state.

First, I was told it had to do with my last job in North Carolina and quickly applied for unemployment there but found out I was ineligible for unemployment as I hadn't worked in NC for a year. Then I was told I did not have sufficient work history. I had no idea why they would say that--I worked for the University of Maryland! It was not until contacting a Maryland State Delegate that I found out I was not considered an employee. I had no idea this was even possible and proceeded to speak to unemployment and the university about the issue. They led me in circles until I was able to speak with someone (through email, no one was willing to tell me in person) and they told me I was a student who received a stipend. I found this out in September, 4 months after applying for unemployment. Administrators and faculty do not tell students they are not considered employees and I believe this should be illegal.

Under the CARES Act I should have received Unemployment from the State of Maryland. Individuals with insufficient work history legally qualify for unemployment due to this act but to this day the State has been unresponsive and refuses to pay me a cent. I spent countless hours calling people, waiting on hold this summer, working part time jobs, stressing out about finances, and trying to figure out the situation. No one at the university (except other grad students) seems to care or want to help students in my situation. To say I am furious about this situation would be

an understatement. I am lucky to split my bills and housing with my partner (who also lost his job during the pandemic) but if I lived alone during the pandemic I would have been unable to afford rent and basic necessities. As someone who came straight from completing their Masters and has never worked a full time job before, I do not have substantial savings to live off of. However, I no longer have the energy or time to debate with unemployment about my situation and aside from getting a lawyer, I have no other option but to accept defeat. This means I will not receive back pay or the \$600 of weekly unemployment I deserve.

I design and teach my own class at the university yet I'm not considered an employee. I am called "professor" by my students who look up to me and expect their instructor to be a legal employee. Over the past 6 months, I have debated leaving the university due to the stress and agony I experienced this past year. Unfortunately, it is difficult to find a job in the economy right now and I do enjoy my role but I often question if it's worth it. When prospective students ask me about my experience at the university the first thing I mention is this issue. I discourage individuals from attending full-time and working for the university, especially if they are relying on it as their sole source of income. We are not undergrads who can rely on our parents for money (even many undergrads do not have this privilege), we are adults trying to earn a living while working towards a degree that we will use to better the world. Even if we could rely on external sources for income, that adds to our stress levels and is no excuse for denying us the right to Collective Bargaining.

It is time for the university to improve working conditions for graduate students and prove that our hard work is valued. Without graduate students, the university would not be able to provide several classes and operate at the standard it does. As a graduate student who teaches and works for the University of Maryland, I am in full support of Collective Bargaining Rights.

Sincerely,

Marissa Sariol-Clough
PhD Education Policy and Leadership, TLPL
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taylor.francis.schulden.pdf

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Position: FAV

Delores G. Kelley, Chair
Brian J. Feldman, Vice Chair
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SB 521
Supporting

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

The present system does not take into account the expenses of time, money, and spirit in order to pursue a graduate degree at the University of Maryland. One the essence of time, many student have to work extremely long hours to meet the deadlines their advisors and themselves set. The main issue at hand is understanding how long certain task will take. The length of time expected by the student is largely underestimated leading to stress. The expense of time and the incurrence of stress is only troubled more so by the cost. For some, the cost of not an issue. The graduate school, for those students fortunate to have complete tuitions remission, does well to provide students with the opportunity to explore the course work they so desire.

However, there are several rules that are simply arcane and or detrimental to the student. For example, my graduate research assistance-ship allocates me i believe 12 or 10 graduate credits covered per semester. However, the ludicrous fact is that if i were to take 9 credits or more, i pay mandatory fees per semester of \$800-\$850 while if i take 8 credit or less the mandatory fees are around \$450. Why is there such a drastic uptick of cost of mandatory fees? i have read the mandatory fees and although i agree with them in the way that it is myself and other supporting the many services UMD has to offer but i feel i am not getting my fare part when i decide to take 3 three credit course and am hit with \$800+ mandatory fee where as if I just could drop 1 credit id reduce that cost by nearly half.

On the topic of expense, the collective bargaining agreement is important also for transportation and parking. Some graduate student live off campus and therefore need to commute to UMD. Im not sure what others believe but i think the cost of parking for graduate students should be 0\$. WE should be provided a parking space along with our Assistance ship. At least, this decision for a "free" parking pass while "employed" should be addressed for graduate student. This is even more imperative in the day of COVID where carpooling is a risk for any individual in the car. Also, because of this many of my lab mates were bombarded with parking tickets for parking in the wrong spot on campus, performing our necessary duties as graduate students, while the campus is seeing probably only or less than 10% of the traffic it would see during a normal semester.

Finally, id like to end on spirit. The spirit of UMD is community. We are TERPS. We want to support one another within the community and just outside of it by our research and our own extracurriculars. The spirit is damaged if graduate students are not allowed to act as a community

as a whole. For this reason and the others outline above, i am submitting testimony of my support for this petition.

Sincerely,

Taylor Francis Schulden
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brian.scott.pdf

Uploaded by: Scott, Brian

Position: FAV

Delores G. Kelley, Chair
Brian J. Feldman, Vice Chair
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SB 521
Supporting

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

The United States has the most impressive model for scientific advancement in the world. The work is done by droves of brilliant people - graduate students. We pay them next to nothing. That's part of what keeps innovation cost effective. However, given the tremendous contribution graduate students make, all of them should at least be able to make enough money to get their basic needs met. I spend 74% of my take-home pay on rent. Graduate students aren't asking for fortunes, but they should be able to afford to eat.

This is not a Covid-19 related issue, but if the current pandemic helps amplify our voice for equitable compensation, use it.

Sincerely,

Brian Scott
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adelaida.shelley.pdf

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Position: FAV

Delores G. Kelley, Chair
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SB 521
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Dear Chair Kelley, Vice Chair Feldman, and Members of the Finance Committee,

I am writing in staunch support of SB 521 Graduate Assistant Collective Bargaining Fairness Act. As a former graduate assistant and co-chair of the Graduate Assistant Advisory Committee (GAAC) at the University of Maryland College Park, I both experienced and witnessed firsthand the hardships faced by graduate assistants employed at the university. GAs repeatedly experienced lapses in pay, lapses in health coverage, intimidation from superiors, etc. The existence of the meet-and-confer policy did little to ameliorate these concerns; the very nature of meet-and-confer denies us any actually meaningful influence over university policy and procedure. It is wholly inadequate for dealing with the labor issues that plague the USM.

I ended up dropping out of my American Studies doctoral program this past October. In the face of the mounting costs of living in the DMV, I could no longer justify accepting such measly pay. At the time of my resignation, I was making under 20k a year, not including summers (during which I worked as a Lyft driver and Doordash delivery person in order to make ends meet). Even so, I believe I had a pretty good deal, relative to the aggregate of GAs at UMCP.

I've testified various times over the last couple years in favor of this bill before both the House and the Senate. My position on the matter is clear. I once again implore the members of this committee to see reason and allow this legislation to finally see the light of day.

Sincerely,
Adelaida Shelley
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Teaching Assistant (formerly)
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SB 521
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Dear Chair Kelley, Vice Chair Feldman, and Members of the Finance Committee,

I am a PhD graduate student who has held many roles at the University of Maryland College Park. In my experience as a TA, RA and simply as a student, I believe our resources are taken advantage of. The COVID - 19 pandemic has exasperated these issues by loss of funding and unsafe practices of making students go to labs in dangerous situations. I support the unionization of graduate students like me because we need to be protected.

Sincerely,

Joy Shen
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mollie.shichman.pdf

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SB 521
Supporting

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

I am extremely concerned by the lack of bargaining rights for graduate students. The work we do is essential, especially during COVID. TAs are often the only people able to give students individual support and learning accommodations that make UMD College Park such a successful school. Even though TAs are essential, our position is very precarious. Though I love my job, I'm very aware that it would take just one manipulative professor to force me to work more hours that I'm contractually obligated to. If that were the case, I would need bargaining power to get my proper compensation. Wage stagnation is also a major concern for me. My wage is just barely livable, and I'm worried about the cost of living increasing over the next 5 years I'm in College Park due to gentrification. I love this school, but I came under the pretense that I would get a degree without debt. If I had to choose between continuing a degree at a deficit or getting a more lucrative job in industry, the choice would be simple. In conclusion, collective bargaining rights would make my sense of security, both economic and emotional, much more concrete.

Sincerely,

Mollie Shichman
Teaching Assistant, Department of Computer Science
University of Maryland, College Park
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mary.corbin.sies.pdf

Uploaded by: Sies, Mary Corbin

Position: FAV

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

SB 521
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 SB521

I have been a faculty member at the University of Maryland College Park since 1988. I just stepped down from directing my department's undergraduate Bachelor of Arts program in American Studies for ten years. 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. They have persevered through this awful pandemic where online teaching increases their workload dramatically and where they have extended care and concern and resourcefulness to help their students learn. 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 \$17,980, below 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. \$17,980 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. We suspect the percentage has gone up since the pandemic took hold in our region.

In addition, graduate assistants are often put in the situation where they have no workplace rights at all. They can be asked or manipulated into working more than their maximum (for fulltime GAships) 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 GAships 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 for the past ten years was 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 educations. 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

University of Maryland Faculty, Department of American Studies

University of Maryland, College Park

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sies@umd.edu

astha.singhal.pdf

Uploaded by: Singhal, Astha

Position: FAV

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

SB 521
Supporting

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

Collective bargaining rights are crucial because of the power dynamics between professors and graduate students. Graduate students, especially those pursuing phds or international students, are dependent on their professors for essentially the continuation of their careers. Funding, employment, career opportunities, visas are all funneled through their research advisor. However, if this arrangement becomes abusive, there are no options for graduate students. There is an immediate fear of retribution, of having absolutely no power over the course of one's life other than to forfeit all of the work they've done or to continue suffering the abuse. Collective Bargaining is necessary to give graduate students rights. This is not a serfdom. Graduate students doing work for their professors is a mutually beneficial agreement, and collective bargaining is necessary for this to be formally recognized.

Sincerely,

Astha Singhal
Graduate Student, CMNS
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izidora.skracic.pdf

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 521
Supporting

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

I am writing in support of SB 521 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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izidora @umd.edu

AFSCME_FAV_SB521 (1).pdf

Uploaded by: Smalls, Cindy

Position: FAV



190 West Ostend St., #201
Baltimore, MD 21230
Phone: 410.547.1515
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Patrick Moran - President

Testimony SB 521

State Personnel – Collective Bargaining

Finance Committee

Support

AFSCME Council 3 supports the passage of SB 521 granting collective bargaining rights to certain graduate students at an institution within the University System of Maryland, Morgan State University, or St. Mary's College of Maryland.

AFSCME Council 3 represents 30,000 State and University employees in Maryland. Our members keep Maryland's public institutions of higher education running every day and even more during these difficult and stressful times.

Collective bargaining through a union would give graduate students power over their employment. Workers in unions are paid more than their nonunionized peers on average, and the boost is even greater for workers of color. Better wages would mean graduate students could support themselves and provide for their families without relying as heavily on student loans to finance their costs of living. Collective bargaining would also help graduate students gain workplace protections and control over their working lives.

While in school, today's graduate students take on more responsibility for university instruction and research than their predecessors did. It is clear that graduate teaching and research assistants play an integral role in the internal economy of a university by helping to produce research and provide quality education. And yet the pay and benefits they receive rarely rises to the level of a living wage.

SB 521 is a small step toward acknowledgement that graduate students should be treated fairly and equitably at their workplace. Granting them the right to choose to join a union is the right thing to do. For these reasons we ask the committee for a FAVORABLE report on SB 521.

Every AFSCME Maryland State and University contract guarantees a right to union representation.
An employee has the right to a union representative if requested by the employee.
800.492.1996

Find us: afscmemd.org
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lydia.stamato.pdf

Uploaded by: Stamato, Lydia

Position: FAV

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

SB 521
Supporting

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

I am writing to support the the passage of SB0521, allowing graduate students to legally decide whether collective bargaining is best for them.

This right would validate two key aspects of graduate student work and experience. First, it would recognize that graduate students do valuable work, contributing to the financial well-being of the university and their fields of research, and second, it would recognize that "learning happens everywhere" (including on the job) and that while graduate students provide valuable and highly skilled labor, we are learning both formally and informally. By recognizing the reality of graduate students of today as workers, we as Marylanders can position ourselves for a future in which the leaders of tomorrow have learned to recognize the the rights workers.

I work and study in a STEM department and field, and it is well known that there are not enough US citizens and permanent residents pursuing advanced degrees in these fields compared with the current need. A major reason for this is working conditions, which Americans with STEM undergraduate degrees can avoid by instead pursuing jobs in industry. This gap is filled by international graduate students, many of whom have fewer options. This avoids addressing the problem itself and is, at best, a short term solution. All graduate student workers deserve better.

I am fortunate to do work I love together with nurturing and skilled mentors, teachers, and peers. However, loving one's work does not mean that one should not have the opportunity to collectively bargain together with other workers.

I currently work on two projects that directly impact Marylanders. One of these arose in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Given the contributions of graduate student workers like me 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 SB0521 enable a better, brighter future for our state and our public universities.

Sincerely,

Lydia Stamato

Graduate Assistant, Department of Information Systems
University of Maryland, Baltimore County
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rachel.stroup.pdf

Uploaded by: Stroup, Rachel

Position: FAV

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

SB 521
Supporting

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

To continue to support a fair, equitable work environment for graduate employees, faculty must do more to understand the economic precariousness of graduate students during the pandemic.

Sincerely,

Rachel Stroup
Graduate Assistant
University of Maryland, College Park
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dj.teal.pdf

Uploaded by: Teal, DJ

Position: FAV

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

SB 521
Supporting

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

I write to you in support of SB 521 Graduate Assistant Collective Bargaining Fairness Act. Labor rights are fundamental to a functioning and fair society; this holds no exception in the realm of academics. Our higher education system is built upon the idea of passing down generations of knowledge for new minds to apply and expand upon. As a graduate student in the Astronomy department, I recognize the immense wealth of knowledge serving as a foundation to the work I do every day.

As graduate students, we act in the role of both master and apprentice; I have taught undergraduates in astronomy and mathematics to prepare them for wherever their futures take them, and am myself taught how to pursue complex research questions and successfully communicate that work to a broader scientific community. Although I enjoy my opportunities in both respects, I know too many students who carry the weight of extreme financial insecurity on top of these responsibilities.

This insecurity has developed over decades of ill treatment. Graduate students have been increasingly exploited with little, if any, fair compensation. Upon completing a PhD or Master's degree, students are thrown into a dismal job market already extremely competitive before being decimated by the COVID-19 pandemic. For any graduate, the economic reality of academia coupled with being extensively overworked is devastating to mental health.

This has been ingrained in the perceived culture of academia. Institutions rely on the exploitation of these workers, promoting it as a stepping stone in a veritable *cursus honorum* in tenured positions they continue to replace with more graduate positions. There is no mincing words here; this problem is driven by an increasing desire for profits over education and a disturbing trend towards business-like management of Maryland academic institutions. All of this comes at the expense of the graduate students these institutions rely on to maintain the institutional mission the State of Maryland has given them.

Passing SB 521 Graduate Assistant Collective Bargaining Fairness Act is an important step in the process of remedying this fundamental flaw in our public institutions. Marylanders rely on our academic institutions to promote scholarship, invest in the future of Maryland, and enable innovation. The present environment fails to fulfill this mission to its fullest extent. Economic justice and financial security will go a long way in reversing the exploitation that impairs the fundamental mission of our university system.

Sincerely,

D. J. Teal

PhD, Department of Astronomy
Research Assistant
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aubrey.tingler.pdf

Uploaded by: Tingler, Aubrey

Position: FAV

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

SB 521
Supporting

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

I became a teaching assistant at the University of Maryland in the fall of 2020, amidst the current pandemic. This was a time when students, professors, and teaching assistants alike were facing the challenges of transitioning to online learning, which made the load on teaching assistants greater than usual. Prepping everything for online versus in person courses amounts to a greater strain on your time and a heavier mental load overall, as everything feels more fragmented and urgent at the same time.

Because teaching assistants are thrown directly into the fire when the University undergoes any changes, planned or otherwise, it is essential that we have the right to collectively bargain for our own interests. Otherwise, we are vital University employees who lack the right to effectively advocate for ourselves. I work an additional job on top of being a teaching assistant and graduate student working on an active research project. Graduate students should not have to choose between the financial welfare and physical and mental wellbeing. In order to have the option to make choices that work for us as important assets to the system of instruction at the University of Maryland, we need collective bargaining rights so that we can advocate and an effectively organize for the rights and privileges we need to make our lives reasonable, affordable, and workable as employees, teachers, administrators, and researchers.

Sincerely,

Aubrey Tingler
Master's of Science, Marine Estuarine and Environmental Sciences
Teaching Assistant
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daniel.trettel.pdf

Uploaded by: Trettel, Daniel

Position: FAV

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

SB 521
Supporting

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

The term "graduate student" is really a misnomer. It conjures up the idea that we simply get paid to study, get some career training done, and eventually get a free degree in the end. The reality is far different. The typically graduate student in reality spends the majority of their time teaching and/or conducting research - two pivotal roles for the University. In fact, I would argue that the University system as a whole would come crumbling down if it wasn't built on the backs of graduate students - i.e. cheap labor - fulfilling the job that are core to running a research university. In short, there would be no UM system without graduate students. Graduate students, or better yet graduate labor, deserves a seat at the table in deciding what is best for us. This power asymmetry has been further exposed thanks to COVID-19. Work has only gotten harder for us, yet the benefits have not kept up. Then again, when have they ever? It's clear that graduate students have held the University system up over the past year, not the other way around. Graduate labor teaching the classes and has adapted to the "new normal" and graduate research brings in the funding. We deserve better.

Sincerely,

Daniel Trettel
Research Assistant, Chemistry and Biochemistry
University of Maryland, College Park
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max.trevor.pdf

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 521
Supporting

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

Over the last two years I have been at UMD, prices of everything have continued to go up as normal and even with a cost of living adjustment, pay has not increased enough to keep up. I am in the physics department, which pays better than most of the other programs, and can still barely make ends meet with nothing left over to save. Other departments literally do not pay their student employees enough to cover the cost of living in college park.

Sincerely,

Max Trevor
Research Assistant, Physics
University of Maryland, College Park
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christie.trimble.pdf

Uploaded by: Trimble, Christie

Position: FAV

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

SB 521
Supporting

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

We are paid for 20 hours of work per week. If this was actually a part time job, we might be able to get a second job to reach a livable annual wage. However, the 20 hour work week is a lie, and no PI, at least in my department, would allow a student to work so little. When I signed on to work with my advisor, he told me 60 hours per week was minimum to be a successful PhD student.

In my first year of graduate school, I worked an average 80 hour week. Sometimes it got up to 100 hours per week with coursework and my RA. In this situation I would often sleep on campus because my hour commute was precious time I couldn't afford to waste. In my second year I made a bed in the closet of my office; in my third year I lived out of my office for about a month. Even now, in my fifth year of graduate school, I have a box with a sleeping bag and pillow inside it just in case the need arises.

I operate million dollar pieces of equipment in my lab. I work with temperatures colder than the deepest darkest part of space. This is skilled labor. If I were paid minimum wage for even 40 hours per week instead of 20--a standard work week!--my life would improve and I might not be so constantly stressed. Yet, because I am a "student" (who no longer takes courses) instead of an "employee", I have no rights to even try to improve my situation.

I am in graduate school because I love physics and want to be a physicist. I am going to continue to the end because this is the only way for me to accomplish my dream. This is true for so many of us: and the professors and department know we have no other choice but to do what they ask, or give up what we want our futures to be. They take the passion of students and leverage it to eek out as much value as they can from us, and it results in an abysmal quality of life for the time we are here. Please help us.

Sincerely,

Christie Trimble
Research Assistant, Department of Physics
University of Maryland, College Park
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sydney.triola.pdf

Uploaded by: Triola, Sydney

Position: FAV

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

SB 521
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 large part of the University's workforce, I would like to see the University grant us the same rights as other workers within the University. From my vantage point, not having the same rights as other workers within the University is a method of devaluing our work and contributions to the University. Instead of being told that we are valued in a letter, I would like these sentiments to be evidenced in the University's actions.

Sincerely,

Sydney Triola
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Teaching Assistant and Research Assistant
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jonelle.walker.pdf

Uploaded by: Walker, Jonelle

Position: FAV

Delores G. Kelley, Chair
Brian J. Feldman, Vice Chair
3 East Miller Senate Office Building
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SB 521
Supporting

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

During these difficult times, I am writing to you from a precarious position. I have spent the last few weeks reckoning with the State of Maryland Benefits office over a clerical error. At various times I have been asked to confirm that I am a state employee. I have yet to come up with a response that satisfies. I am a state employee in some regards and not in others. I have health insurance subsidized by the state, but I cannot take paid sick leave should I need to use it. This contradiction organizes my experience with graduate student employment in the University System of Maryland (USM) over the past six years.

The inexplicable loopholes around graduate student labor has caused incalculable confusion and strife in my home department. A pregnant colleague struggled to navigate starting their TA contract a week after giving birth. A colleague caring for a disabled partner felt unable to take leave, while another liberally asked fellow grads to cover their assignments without consequence. I co-authored an article with a colleague pointing out that as graduate student employees we are mandatory reporters under Title IX. However, that role demands us to act as agents of the State of Maryland and the University without receiving full recognition and protections as employees of those institutions. These confusions are commonplace. I have been fortunate to not experience overburdensome assignments; random termination; and dangerously obtuse regulations for lab workers during COVID-19.

I urge the Members of the Finance Committee to consider not only the enormous productivity and labor that graduate students provide to USM, but also the human cost of such a large sector left in precarity. Though we contribute through our labor to the local economy, we struggle to participate in it. Low income relative to cost of living; contingent employment; and limited or non-existent leave policies have a clear impact on our fiscal and physical health.

The COVID-19 crisis has demonstrated that so many of our fellow Americans are more insecure than we knew. Granting graduate student employees the right to collectively bargain is an important component of our local, state, and national recovery.

Sincerely,

Jonelle Walker
PhD, Theatre and Performance Studies
Teaching Assistant

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alexis.walston.pdf

Uploaded by: Walston, Alexis

Position: FAV

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

SB 521
Supporting

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

As a graduate student at UMD, I am expected to work, research, and write full time; however, I earn far below a livable wage in the DMV area. Not only are graduate students massively underpaid, but we are also often dependent upon outside work, competitive fellowships, and outside funding just to afford basic living expenses. These additional jobs take away from our ability to do our best and most effective work at UMD - from teaching to researching.

Graduate students are treated as staff when it's financially expedient and we are treated as students when it can save time and hassle. For example, Prince George's County claims anyone working in higher ed in the county is eligible for the covid vaccine in phase 1b; however, when graduate students (who teach undergraduates) arrived for their vaccine, they were denied because they aren't "faculty," they're "students." This is just one example of how graduate students' status is dependent on what's most convenient for the University.

As graduate students, we deserve to advocate for our rights - not to have an administrator far removed from the trials of graduate school decide what's best for us. Graduate students deserve to have the agency to make these choices for ourselves.

Sincerely,

Alexis Walston
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noel.warford.pdf

Uploaded by: Warford, Noel

Position: FAV

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

SB 521
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,

Noel Warford
PhD, Computer Science
Research Assistant and Teaching Assistant
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Hyattsville, MD 20783
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amy.wickner.pdf

Uploaded by: Wickner, Amy

Position: FAV

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

SB 521
Supporting

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

I'm writing in support of SB 521 and granting collective bargaining rights to graduate assistants in the University System of Maryland, Morgan State University, and St. Mary's College of Maryland. As an employee, student, and former graduate assistant at the University of Maryland, College Park, I can testify that graduate assistants perform work that is necessary for a functioning university, and that enjoining them to perform this work without the right to collectively bargain is exploitative.

University administrators like to say that graduate assistants are “students first,” even writing such language into the Graduate School’s assistantship policies. The “students first” approach has not served to protect graduate assistants’ welfare and ability to balance earning wages with completing degree requirements, as administrators may claim, or is it intended to. Instead, it effectively denies an entire class of workers, who are also students, the rights they should be accorded as workers.

A note about what graduate assistants do: Many teach multiple course sections of undergraduate and graduate students, including large general education and core or introductory courses. Often the first instructors and advisors students encounter at the College Park campus are graduate student workers. Graduate assistants conduct the research on which faculty members depend for their own advancement, often taking on hands-on and/or repetitive tasks that faculty members and staff will not do. Graduate student workers keep labs and studies running while faculty members devote time to pursuing grants and other external funding on which the university bases its research enterprise. Graduate assistants also fill crucial administrative roles, working as academic advisors to large numbers of fellow students, or developing and running programs at the many centers on campus – such as the LGBT Equity Center and Multicultural Student Involvement and Community Advocacy (MICA) at the Stamp Student Union. Often the first mentorship students enjoy at the College Park campus comes to them through the persons or labor of graduate student workers.

I work in the University Libraries on the College Park campus, and have previously submitted testimony to the Assembly about how graduate assistants do all of the above work and more in the Libraries. Many core library functions depend on the labor of graduate assistants. These include teaching, metadata management, user research and usability, processing archival collections, outreach, and maintaining digital systems. Graduate assistants are involved in every

program and resource with which the Libraries cultivate community and knowledge sharing. Nearly everything a librarian does here, a graduate assistant also does.

The university would collapse were graduate assistants to withhold their labor. University administrators across Maryland have long resisted collective bargaining rights for graduate assistants out of fear, using duplicitous and divisive means. It's time for the General Assembly to hold these state institutions to account. **Graduate student workers are workers.**

Sincerely,

Amy Wickner

Ph.D. Candidate, iSchool

Electronic Records Archivist (2017-), Digital Projects Graduate Assistant (2014-2017),

University of Maryland Libraries

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christopher.williams.pdf

Uploaded by: Williams, Christopher

Position: FAV

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

SB 521
Supporting

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

Graduate workers at many public and all private universities already have the right to unionize. Furthermore, our bill says nothing about grads having to unionize or what any units would look like. All we want to do is remove the language that specifically denies our status as employees and allow grads at each university in Maryland the right to choose for themselves if a union is right for them.

Sincerely,

Christopher Williams
Teaching Assistant
University of Maryland, College Park
UMD SPH 4200 Valley Drive, College Park, MD 20742
cwilli30@umedu

brinda.yarlagadda.pdf

Uploaded by: Yarlagadda, Brinda

Position: FAV

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

SB 521
Supporting

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

I am a graduate student and research assistant in the School of Public Policy at UMD. I would like to urge you to support SB 521. Graduate student assistants often put in far more than the 20 hours per week we are compensated for, contributing to the advancement of research, education of students, and well-being of society. We deserve the right to collectively bargain, to be treated as employees, and to be able to air grievances to the Higher Education Relations Board.

Sincerely,

Brinda Yarlagadda
Research Assistant
University of Maryland, College Park
Apt. 411 8201 16th St., Silver Spring, Maryland 20910
brinday@umd.edu

nan.zhang.pdf

Uploaded by: Zhang, Nan

Position: FAV

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

SB 521
Supporting

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

I think the income is comparable to the schools in low-expense areas. So the stipend is not quite enough for us.

Sincerely,

Nan Zhang
Teaching Assistant
University of Maryland, College Park
Benjamin building, College Park, Maryland 20740
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SB521_USM_UNF_BOUGHMAN.pdf

Uploaded by: Boughman, Joann

Position: UNF



SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE

Senate Bill 521

Higher Education – Collective Bargaining – Graduate Assistants

February 18, 2021

**Dr. Joann Boughman, Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs
Urging an Unfavorable Report**

Chair Kelley, Vice Chair Feldman and committee members, thank you for the opportunity to share our thoughts on Senate Bill 521. The bill authorizes graduate assistants at the University System of Maryland (USM) to collectively bargain.

The USM has worked over the last decade to improve the status of the USM’s approximately 6,000 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. Focused on the fact that these individuals are first and foremost students earning advanced degrees, the USM has 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 regarding 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 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 for their half-time work, most USM graduate assistants receive a tuition-free education worth an average of \$22,000 annually, fully subsidized state health care, stipend increases in each year of a contract, and exemption from paying FICA taxes, which means their paychecks are 7.65% higher than those of faculty or staff earning comparable wages.
- 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. To date, no group of graduate

assistants has taken advantage of the opportunity to use a labor organization during the “meet and confer” process.

- Repealing the law would create a confusing maze of litigation and legal expense over which “groups” or “classes” 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, parental and personal leave, professional evaluation, and discipline.

The concept and ongoing process within the USM known as “shared governance” 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. At the institutional level, the shared governance bodies raise issues and have discussions with the administrators who have direct management of the day-to-day operations of the campus. 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 3 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. We believe that, given this diversity and the specified opportunities for the graduate students to work with their administrations under the “meet and confer” process, the specific challenges that students are facing at a given institution should be handled at the institutional level. Since the meet and confer process allows for a group, such as graduate assistants, to include a representative (such as a union representative) in those discussions, the process should be used to its fullest to address remaining issues.

Thank you for allowing the USM to share these concerns regarding Senate Bill 521.

SB 521 Written Testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Fetter, Steven

Position: UNF



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SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE

Senate Bill 521

State Personnel — Collective Bargaining

February 18, 2021

Urging an Unfavorable Report

Chair Kelley, Vice Chair Feldman, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for allowing me to testify on Senate Bill 521, which would authorize graduate assistants to collectively bargain.

Graduate assistants are students first and foremost. Nearly all Ph.D. students are GAs, and their duties as graduate teaching and research assistants are part of their education. Many doctoral programs expect or require all students to teach as part of their education, not only to prepare them as future faculty but to gain experience explaining complex subjects and to understand the subject more deeply by learning to explain it to others. Research assistantships allow students to learn to do original research and scholarship under the guidance of a faculty mentor—research that often is identical to the dissertation research that is required for their degree.

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 productive avenue to address student concerns and solutions for the past ten years.

In response to concerns about stipend levels, the minimum stipend has increased 20% since July 2018. The minimum stipend is now above the cost of attendance, including living expenses. The average stipend of \$22,000 for a 20 hours per week GA appointment during the 9-month academic year is equivalent to \$58,600 per year for full-time work. GAs receive free tuition and subsidized health insurance, bringing average GA compensation to about \$50,000 per year—for 20 hours per week over the 9-month academic year. Our average stipend is in the middle of the Big Ten peers that have collective bargaining for GAs.

Meet and Confer outcomes include new policies for parental leave, time away from duties, and a grievance process. A Counselor position was created last year 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. In response to concerns that GAs were working more than 20 hours per week, we commissioned an independent study which showed GAs spend an average of 18 hours per week on their duties—including 6 hours that contribute to a student's own research required for the degree.

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 11 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 problems as needed. Collective bargaining would limit the University’s ability to address graduate student problems as they arise and reduce the current flexibility to tailor solutions to the situation of a particular student.

The financial impact of collective bargaining would depend on the details of whatever contract is negotiated, but it could be substantial. Advocates of collective bargaining have argued for stipend levels of more than \$36,000 per year. Raising stipends to that level would cause a 70 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 Maryland economy.

In addition to increased stipends, collective bargaining could 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 adding additional benefits could result in GAs being reclassified as “professional employees,” subject to additional taxes. The University may 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. Expenditures 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 521, 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 a student does for his or her dissertation and degree. 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 it 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 research 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 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.

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 2021, 20 hour/week appointment

Institution	Minimum Stipend		Collective Bargaining?		
	Academic Year	Full Year	TA	AA	RA
Rutgers ¹	30,162	33,999	Y	Y	Y
Michigan ²	22,433		Y	Y	
Penn State	20,790	27,720			
Wisconsin ³	20,402	24,816			
Iowa	20,041	24,486	Y	Y	
Maryland⁴	19,359	24,452			
Ohio State	19,280	25,707			
Illinois	17,788	23,717	Y	Y	
Michigan St ⁵	17,004	22,672	Y		
Purdue	15,448	18,538			
Minnesota	15,343	20,456			
Nebraska	10,610	14,147			
Indiana	9,914	11,892			

¹Standard appointment is 15 hours per week.

²No minimum full-year stipend.

³Academic-year stipend is the average of minimum TA (\$20,500) and RA (\$20,304) stipends.

⁴For 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.

⁵For TA. The minimum academic-year stipend for non-union AAs and RAs is \$14,118.

Average Cost of Attendance and Average Stipend, AY20-21 (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	\$1,555	\$572
Transportation	\$522	\$522
Average cost of attendance	\$52,414	\$18,931
Average academic-year stipend	—	\$21,989

Tuition is the maximum covered for graduate assistants at the non-resident rate; average graduate tuition is \$23,584. 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>.