

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  
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