

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
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