



**Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 9 (Senator Kramer)
FAVORABLE**

February 4, 2021

Dear Chair Kelley and Members of the Finance Committee:

On behalf of Strong Future Maryland, we write in strong support of Senate Bill 9. Strong Future Maryland works to advance bold, progressive policy changes to address systemic inequality and promote a sustainable, just, and prosperous economic future for all Marylanders. We urge you to support this legislation which establishes a fair collective bargaining process for Maryland's higher education employees and workers.

Our country is dealing with a long overdue reckoning on systemic racism and injustice. But it's time we turn those sentiments into action by committing to real policy change that turns rhetoric into reality. Maryland's higher education employees and all workers deserve to be treated fairly. Collective bargaining is a tool that can help address race and gender disparities for employees in our state. That means those doing the same job should have the same opportunities to succeed.

We are proud to stand with AFSCME and their members to ask that the legislature immediately address the need for fair bargaining practices and require the University System of Maryland to negotiate a single contract that ensures every University System employee has equal protections. Human capital is our most important asset. We cannot afford to shortchange those who work every day on behalf of students.

As the General Assembly is looking to address years of inequitable treatment to Maryland's HBCUs in HB1, this bill, SB9 will ensure that staff at HBCUs are also allotted the same opportunities as those at predominantly white institutions. It is vital that we have one negotiating table where everyone has a say and we eliminate the barriers and the red tape that prevents us from having full transparency. In Maryland, we need a thriving and safe university system where equity, justice and fairness prevail. We urge a favorable report for SB9.

John B. King Jr.

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