

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  
cawthorr@gmail.com