

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,

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,

Sahana Kumar
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