

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 am a GA at the University of Maryland. I love my school. I love my job. I love my education. And I would not be able to do this without the support of my family, specifically, my father, a retired federal employee and union president. I am incredibly privileged to have the financial support of my father because the graduate stipend IS NOT ENOUGH to live on, let alone pursue a degree.

I have been in my position since August, 2020. In March I was evacuated from the Peace Corps because of COVID. I came back to the U.S. with no job, no health insurance, and no housing. Fortunately, I had already applied and been accepted to UMD. Over the summer I survived on unemployment, my savings, and eventually a retail position.

My first semester, with tuition remission, I used the majority of my savings and Peace Corps settlement (\$7,500) to pay my student bill. This semester, I have had to ask my father to loan me money to cover the cost of my education. I get around \$720 a month from my graduate position. I spend \$300 on rent, leaving \$420 for groceries, car insurance, and everyday necessities.

Graduate students make sacrifice after sacrifice for their education. Right now, we have no one to turn to to advocate for us. Collective bargaining would mean that we are not alone. It would allow all graduate employees the opportunity to be heard. Together, we can pool our resources and create innovative solutions that serve the entire community.

I urge you to pass SB 521 because this is a long overdue measure. We deserve a voice. We deserve recognition. We deserve collective bargaining rights.

Sincerely,

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