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Patrick Moran - President

Testimony SB 521

State Personnel – Collective Bargaining

Finance Committee

Support

AFSCME Council 3 supports the passage of SB 521 granting collective bargaining rights to certain graduate students at an institution within the University System of Maryland, Morgan State University, or St. Mary's College of Maryland.

AFSCME Council 3 represents 30,000 State and University employees in Maryland. Our members keep Maryland's public institutions of higher education running every day and even more during these difficult and stressful times.

Collective bargaining through a union would give graduate students power over their employment. Workers in unions are paid more than their nonunionized peers on average, and the boost is even greater for workers of color. Better wages would mean graduate students could support themselves and provide for their families without relying as heavily on student loans to finance their costs of living. Collective bargaining would also help graduate students gain workplace protections and control over their working lives.

While in school, today's graduate students take on more responsibility for university instruction and research than their predecessors did. It is clear that graduate teaching and research assistants play an integral role in the internal economy of a university by helping to produce research and provide quality education. And yet the pay and benefits they receive rarely rises to the level of a living wage.

SB 521 is a small step toward acknowledgement that graduate students should be treated fairly and equitably at their workplace. Granting them the right to choose to join a union is the right thing to do. For these reasons we ask the committee for a FAVORABLE report on SB 521.

Every AFSCME Maryland State and University contract guarantees a right to union representation.
An employee has the right to a union representative if requested by the employee.
800.492.1996

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