

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 have enjoyed academic, financial, and professional privileges in my roles as both a graduate assistant and a teaching assistant within the Maryland School of Architecture, Planning, and Preservation (MAPP). Yet, I have also experienced the following challenges:

- 1) Being paid at an incorrect and lower level than was stipulated by my “contract.” I was disbelieved by one MAPP administrator before being shamed by a faculty member for pressing the business office to correct their mistake;
- 2) Having my healthcare mistakenly terminated in June of 2019—due to the error of a MAPP administrator—during a month where I had undergone a major medical procedure. I was later asked to “remain calm” when no one could answer whether I needed to pay the thousands-dollar bill I received, whether my procedure could be retroactively covered, or even **if** my health care coverage could ultimately be restored;
- 3) Being initially denied payment for work completed during a supplemental hourly appointment, the contract for which had been signed by a MAPP administrator who later decided that “double-dipping” appointments is, apparently, “against policy.”

The result of these experiences has been financial insecurity, limitless anxiety, and antagonism and mistrust between myself and several of my program administrators. The right to collectively bargain does more than offer student-employees the promise of a potentially more stable future: it provides us legitimacy under the law to assert our interests and prevent our exploitation, whether that exploitation is intentional or not. At their best, institutions such as the University of Maryland can provide a safe space for ideas and experimentation—two things the state of Maryland needs in order to remain at the leading edge of innovation across multiple fields. But a bureaucracy that cannot be trusted to take care of its most valuable asset—students—does not deserve the power afforded by the status quo.

In closing, I support SB 521 and urge you to do the same. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Kari Nye
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