

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 writing in staunch support of SB 521 Graduate Assistant Collective Bargaining Fairness Act. As a former graduate assistant and co-chair of the Graduate Assistant Advisory Committee (GAAC) at the University of Maryland College Park, I both experienced and witnessed firsthand the hardships faced by graduate assistants employed at the university. GAs repeatedly experienced lapses in pay, lapses in health coverage, intimidation from superiors, etc. The existence of the meet-and-confer policy did little to ameliorate these concerns; the very nature of meet-and-confer denies us any actually meaningful influence over university policy and procedure. It is wholly inadequate for dealing with the labor issues that plague the USM.

I ended up dropping out of my American Studies doctoral program this past October. In the face of the mounting costs of living in the DMV, I could no longer justify accepting such measly pay. At the time of my resignation, I was making under 20k a year, not including summers (during which I worked as a Lyft driver and Doordash delivery person in order to make ends meet). Even so, I believe I had a pretty good deal, relative to the aggregate of GAs at UMCP.

I've testified various times over the last couple years in favor of this bill before both the House and the Senate. My position on the matter is clear. I once again implore the members of this committee to see reason and allow this legislation to finally see the light of day.

Sincerely,  
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Teaching Assistant (formerly)  
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