

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,

The University System of Maryland cannot function without the labor of its graduate assistants. They represent an irreplaceable component not only of USM research activities and personnel, but also of undergraduate instruction as well. With their knowledge, expertise, and labor value, graduate assistants are an irreplaceable asset for the University System of Maryland. However, denying them the right to collectively bargain not only disenfranchises them, it also dehumanises them, stripping from them their agency and their ability to fairly negotiate the terms of their employment, a right that the very foundations of labor and capital in the modern world were built on. Now, during the COVID-19 pandemic, this lack of agency is not only financially risky, but represents a real danger to graduate assistants: By denying them full employment status and their right to collective bargaining, the state of Maryland has signalled that these irreplaceable young people are not only undeserving of true employment, but are undeserving of their health and safety. The only ethical choice for the State and University System of Maryland is to allow graduate assistants the right to collective bargaining.

Sincerely,

Sophia Relph
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