

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,

As graduate students, Teaching, Administrative, and Research Assistants are in a vulnerable position without collective bargaining rights. While these assistantships provide the necessary tuition support to complete a degree, the rate of pay is not reflective of living costs surrounding the University of Maryland. In College Park and the surrounding areas, it is almost impossible to find rooms or apartments under \$1,000 per month. With the increasing number of luxury student accommodations being constructed surrounding campus and the rapidly expanding DC metro area housing market, rental rates are ever-increasing. Finding a room or apartment at or below this rate is rare and often comes with problems that no one should have to face, and at the very least are not conducive to learning, such as mice or bedbug infestations or mold. Even the official graduate housing apartments are notorious for such issues. At current graduate student salaries, it is unfeasible to afford such rates unless students are receiving outside financial support, such as familial support. It should not need to be stated that not all students have this privilege. Collective bargaining rights would afford all Maryland graduate students the ability to advocate for living wages relative to the area in which they study.

Sincerely,

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