

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,

Employees should have rights to bargain for what they believe they deserve. Being a student or working for a state-owned institute does not make it an exception. Employers should listen to their employees' voices, not only for the well-being of employees, but also for their own sake. Because working efficiency, especially for creative types of work, comes from satisfying working conditions. I believe what the University of Maryland has done in building a healthy relationship between the school and GAs are far from satisfying. I heard complains about low salaries and high home rent in the DC area. Our mandatory fees, which a lot of schools do not have, are not included in the tuition remission. That means over \$1,600 a year if you register for over 8 credits every semester (which is a requirement in our department). I could hardly make ends meet at the beginning of every semester. Life as a PhD student is stressful, and financial burdens make the experience worse. As an International student, there are much less financial aids for us as most of them only target domestic students. Without bargaining rights, there is no way but silently suffer or just, leave. Many of the essential work in the school are done by GAs. University of Maryland has always been seeking to provide high quality teaching, part of which is provided or supported by GAs. Our research ranking achieves the highest in the history, which cannot be achieved without those hard working research assistants. If high quality education and research are still of high priority in the university, the voice of the GAs should be heard, to enlarge our community, and to make every one of us comfortably work towards a higher goal.

Sincerely,

Zipei Lu  
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