

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 strong support of collective bargaining rights for graduate employees, and urge you to pass SB 521. This is extremely necessary for all the graduate employees who are at the forefront of novel research, teaching undergraduate and graduate students, and carrying the bulk of administrative duties and logistics ensuring the smooth functioning of their respective departments.

I am a doctoral student and a graduate research assistant. I have also been a graduate teaching assistant helping facilitate learning in both 200-level and 400-level undergraduate courses which are critical to undergraduate education in my department. Me and my fellow graduate employees make significant contributions based on a considerable amount of daily work, but our efforts are often exploited because we lack the necessary power and rights to negotiate for fair compensation and benefits. At the very least, we deserve to have our voices heard and have a functioning seat at the table when it comes to discussing and negotiating our benefits, which often determine our very livelihoods for many years. Our responsibilities also tend to increase with various roles, and unforeseen changes like the recent pandemic means adjustment and addition to our roles, efforts, and contributions. However, without collective bargaining rights, we have no say in how any shifts in responsibilities are accounted for in our pay and benefits. This can lead to devastatingly poor working conditions with no real say in how to get out of such conditions.

Collective bargaining rights will vastly help with graduate employees taking a reasonable measure of control over their working conditions instead of having to rely on the sympathy and good-will of faculty or other administrative employees. A say in the pay, benefits, and other variables that have a large impact on our lives will go a long way in helping improve working conditions and is also really the only fair option. I urge you to support me and all graduate employees by supporting and passing SB 521. To be completely honest, not passing this bill is a big stain on UMD's reputation and potential for future graduate students and employees who may want to bring their talents to our university, but may be deterred by working conditions and especially having little to no say in doing anything about it.

Sincerely,

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