

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 to you to urge you to support SB521 to afford graduate assistants the same rights as employees of any other organization: to organize and to choose to bargain collectively. We are, in deed if not in name, employees, and we deserve the same protections as other classes of employees, which are not guaranteed to us as students.

I consider myself exceedingly fortunate in that I have not had to take on additional work outside of my assistantships during my time as a doctoral student; however, that is due to the fact that my spouse earns substantially more than I do and provides a financial cushion we would not otherwise have. The \$18,000 annual stipend I was offered upon acceptance to the University of Maryland -- the state's flagship campus -- is not enough to live on as an individual adult. Certainly it is not a fair wage for the work I have done and the qualifications I hold, even when factoring in tuition remission and other benefits.

For the past year, I have held an assistantship under the guidance of kind and accommodating supervisors. They have respected my time and studies and have sought to provide me professional development and support. Other graduate students are not as fortunate in their work circumstances, but such differences in our experiences should not be due to chance, the whims of supervisors, or the fact that acting as instructor of record only counts as a "half-time" assistantship, forcing graduate students to choose between their own time and the quality of instruction they provide to other students. We all deserve fair and just wages, respect for our time, and access to hospitable working conditions, which are not guaranteed to us as students but could be guaranteed to employees through negotiation.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Karen Feagin  
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