

Delores G. Kelley, Chair  
Brian J. Feldman, Vice Chair  
3 East Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, MD 21401

SB 118  
Supporting

Dear Chair Kelley, Vice Chair Feldman, and Members of the Finance Committee,

I am one of the lucky graduate assistants--I have a full-time (20 hr/week, 12 month) position and a decent working environment. However, my experience is the outlier, not the norm. Funding remains a source of constant stress for every graduate student I know, and some of them have had to pause or stop pursuing their degrees entirely because they were unable to continue working in the current conditions, and COVID-19 has made these situations worse, not better. I work in-person on campus, and I regularly worry that I am going to be the one to bring COVID-19 back to my household. I have seen other segments of the campus worker population exercising their right to collectively bargain and directly advocate for themselves and I support them wholeheartedly, and I believe that graduate assistants and workers should have the same abilities. Graduate workers complete essential work for this university and the university system, and to pretend our contributions are not "real work" is disingenuous at best.

My work as a graduate assistant actually has nothing at all to do with my degree program--it's not even in the same department. The work I do as a graduate assistant cannot be categorized as "academic" or in support of my course of study, it is just essential work for the university, just like other non-graduate staff workers. All of our work is essential to the continued functioning of the university, including those graduate students who work as research and teaching assistants, because collectively we make the current university system possible. As workers, we deserve the right to determine for ourselves whether or not we will bargain collectively or individually, just like all of the other workers on campus who are not arbitrarily restricted. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted how important it is for all workers at this university to have a process that they feel represents them fairly and that allows them a meaningful voice, and until graduate workers have the ability to collectively bargain if we so choose, we will not be fully and fairly represented in this process.

Sincerely,

Erin Taylor  
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