

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,

Unionization is the most powerful way for workers to protect themselves from more powerful institutions. It is, quite frankly, insulting that we as graduate students must fight this hard simply to obtain the ability to collectively bargain. As a result of this, our pay is significantly below what would be expected, given living expenses in the area. I am forced to live at home in Baltimore and commute to avoid the exorbitant cost of living near College Park. Beyond this, we graduate students are limited in the ability to find work outside of our duties as teaching or research assistants, given both the restrictive language given in our employment contracts and the long hours required to work and attend class not allowing much time for work extracurricular work anyway. It is our right as workers to come together and improve our working conditions by collectively flexing our strength in the only way we can: through unionization.

As a result of the COVID pandemic and related staff shortages, my work as a lab TA places a much larger burden on me than prior to the pandemic. We are working with students who have missed significant in-person lab time, which has resulted in then missing significant lab skills which they otherwise would have had. As a result, I am forced to hold a greater degree of responsibility, and pay more attention in order to ensure safety in the lab. Additionally, the preparation for the lab is often incomplete, requiring me to scramble to grab chemicals from the stock room in the few minutes between me arriving to lab and the students beginning the experiment. Despite this increase in responsibilities, there has been no corresponding increase in compensation. Collective bargaining would allow us as graduate students to take advantage of the University's heavy reliance on underpaid labor to fight for better working conditions.

Sincerely,

Collin John Vincent
Department of Chemistry
University of Maryland, College Park
7115 Holabird Avenue , Baltimore, Maryland 21222
cjbv@umd.edu