

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 strongly support the status of graduate workers to be classified as employees and the collective bargaining rights that comes with it. The most important task of a graduate student should always be his/her coursework and thesis research. A graduate assistantship is often the only source of income supporting this crucial period of career development.

I speak as an international student at the Dept. of Mathematics at the University of Maryland. The vast majority of graduate students in our program rely solely on the income from teaching assistantship to be able to afford rent among other living costs in College Park. The COVID-19 pandemic has greatly complicated the work condition even with teaching completely online. The online environment has increased the teaching load significantly, both in adjustment to new platforms and format, and an increasing amount of assignments and greater responsibility to engage the students in the online setting. Furthermore, the graduate students are often not themselves the sole instructor, they are subject to long and frequent class meetings at the requirement of lecturers and course chairs. Without collective bargaining rights, the department will never put graduate students in any sort of priority, the graduate assistants are at the mercy of arbitrarily varying workload and unclear specification of responsibilities.

The lack of control on teaching workload have also enabled the university to hire much less GAs with lower salary compared to many other public universities. Recently the Dept. of Mathematics have implemented sudden changed the policy on support for those who have been in program for 7+ years (average length of degree is actually 6.5 years in MATH). This cruel and arbitrary decision in the middle of a global pandemic jeopardized my own assistantship position and several of my colleagues have lost their support.

Sincerely,

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