

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,

The University of Maryland at College Park has one of the lowest cost of living to graduate stipend ratios among similar institutions in the United States. According to the MIT Living Wage Calculator, a living wage in Baltimore, MD is \$15. 81 per hour. This means graduate students at the University of Maryland currently earn between ten and fifteen thousand dollars below a living wage. As an institution located in the Washington, DC metro area, rent and other living costs are difficult to afford for students while maintaining a healthy quality of life that includes access to fresh food, medical care, and being able to cover basic expenses without constant stress. My partner and I live in Baltimore city. I am a graduate research assistant at UMD College Park and work part time in retail to make ends meet. He is a student at UMBC and teaches computer programming classes through UMBC Training Centers for work. We live in a one bedroom apartment and pay \$900 per month between the two of us for rent. We spend roughly \$125 per week on food for the two of us and rarely eat out. We keep our phone, car, and insurance payments as low as we can. It is still virtually impossible to save enough money to cover something like an unexpected medical expense or car repair. The graduate students at the University of Maryland need collective bargaining rights so that they can effectively advocate for stipends that are livable and just. The state higher education institutions of Maryland have the opportunity to set an example of what it means to pay graduate students fairly instead of perpetuating an abusive system that keeps graduate students barely able to keep their head above water financially. Graduate students already hold degrees. We are trained professionals doing valuable research and work in our fields that benefits our state's economy, environment, and well-being. The graduate assistants at the University of Maryland need to help of the legislature to win our right to bargain for our needs instead of being disregarded students who are not part of our state's prosperity. We are Maryland's future success and progress. We should be able to pay our bills.

Sincerely,

Aubrey Tingler
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