

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,

As a graduate teaching assistant in the School of Music, I fully support graduate student workers' right to collective bargaining in the state of Maryland. To me, there is absolutely no downside to extending this right to graduate student workers who, as of 2022, are not paid a wage that is liveable or sustainable. When I speak to fellow teaching assistants in my division, I notice many flaws within the system that we currently operate in. Many of us have partners or kids or other extenuating circumstances which are not covered by the current amount that we are paid on either a 9.5 month or 12 month assistantship and most have some form of secondary income on top of our coursework and teaching duties. Housing in College Park is also a massive issue and the expectation to find our own safe and comfortable housing on the current stipend is completely unacceptable when the rent in most areas nearby is hovering around \$2000 a month.

To be more general, I would also note that in many other large universities across the country, the right to collective bargaining is a standard practice. I would actually argue that it is strange and unusual that such large celebrated universities in Maryland do not have this as an option. To me, it ensures safety, health, and fair treatment of graduate student workers. It is also absolutely a factor that a prospective graduate student will consider when choosing a school. How many students are passing up great offers and great opportunities at places like UMD because they fear not being protected?

Recent events and COVID-19 have shown that workers in every field want better for themselves and will not stand for conditions that compromise their mental and physical health. To be frank, I truly believe that if it continues this way, people are just going to take their business and labor elsewhere. I have greatly enjoyed my experience at UMD so far, but I want my classmates and future students to have the right to collective bargaining. I hope that the thoughts and experiences of myself and my colleagues will be taken into consideration.

Sincerely,

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