

HB 751 - State Personnel - Collective Bargaining.p

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MARYLAND STATE & D.C. AFL-CIO

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HB 751 – State Personnel – Collective Bargaining House Appropriations Committee February 15, 2022

SUPPORT

Donna S. Edwards

President

Maryland State and DC AFL-CIO

Madam Chair and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of HB 751 – State Personnel – Collective Bargaining. My name is Donna S. Edwards, and I am the President of the Maryland State and District of Columbia AFL-CIO. On behalf of the 340,000 union members, I offer the following comments.

Currently, the University of Maryland system considers Graduate Assistants (GA) as students, not workers. This means that GAs do not have the right to collectively bargain for better wages and benefits. The “meet and confer” process – a university compromise meant to mollify GAs who fought for collective bargaining in 2012 – has failed to address key concerns of Graduate Assistants, mainly on issues of stipends, intellectual property rights, and family leave. The only way for workers to fully realize their rights in the workplace is by bargaining with their employers. Graduate Assistants at the University System of Maryland, St. Mary’s College of Maryland, and Morgan State University need and have earned the right to collectively bargain.

Collective bargaining for graduate assistants is not new, unique, or different. Currently, 30 universities, including the University of Wisconsin, University of Michigan, University of Illinois, and the University of California at Berkley have collective bargaining for graduate assistants. These are universities that – in the case of Wisconsin – have had collective bargaining rights for student workers for decades. Far from seeing any ill effects that are constantly promulgated by those who oppose collective bargaining, these universities are thriving, and the student workers on their campuses have the additional protections afforded them through speaking with one voice at the bargaining table.

In an Executive Order from early last year, President Biden reaffirmed the position of the United States on collective bargaining rights by stating “*It is also the policy of the United States to*

encourage union organizing and collective bargaining."¹ We believe that the State of Maryland should follow the lead of the United States and do the same. HB 751 is an affirmation of our values to encourage and empower workers to decide their own fate, and not be tied solely to the decisions of the employers.

It is time to give Graduate Assistants the right to collectively bargain for themselves, and **for these reasons, we urge a favorable vote on HB 751.**

¹ <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2021/01/22/executive-order-protecting-the-federal-workforce/>

BaltimoreCounty_FAV_HB0751.pdf

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County Executive

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Associate Director of Government Affairs

BILL NO.: **HB 751**

TITLE: State Personnel – Collective Bargaining

SPONSOR: Delegate Foley

COMMITTEE: Appropriations

POSITION: **SUPPORT**

DATE: February 15, 2022

Baltimore County **SUPPORTS** House Bill 751 – State Personnel – Collective Bargaining. This legislation grants collective bargaining rights to graduate students at a University of Maryland system institution, Morgan State University, or St. Mary’s College who is in a teaching, administrative, research, or comparable position.

Graduate students within University of Maryland system and other graduate schools are vital to the functioning of institutions at large, including to the success of undergraduate students. These students assist the institution and its professors through research, education, administrative functions, and in running the day-to-day operations of schools and programs. Students serving in this capacity have the unique ability to inform the institution in their capacity not only as students, but as employees.

County Executive John Olszewski is an avid supporter of the empowerment and rights of workers through collective bargaining. Collective bargaining is vital for employees as it provides them with the opportunity to gain representation in decisions made by an employer that will have consequences for the system at large. This is especially vital for graduate students as they are an increasingly vital component of educational institutions.

Accordingly, Baltimore County requests a **FAVORABLE** report on HB 751. For more information, please contact Joel Beller, Acting Director of Government Affairs at jbeller@baltimorecountymd.gov.

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Testimony
HB 751 – State Personnel - Collective Bargaining
Appropriations
February 15, 2022
Support

AFSCME Council 3 supports the passage of HB 751. This legislation would grant collective bargaining rights to graduate students at institutions within the University System of Maryland, Morgan State University, or St. Mary's College of Maryland who are a teaching, administrative, or research assistants, or in comparable positions, fellows, or postdoctoral interns.

AFSCME Council 3 represents employees throughout our higher education system. We know that graduate assistants are among the hardest working and *least appreciated* members of our public higher education system. Despite the high level of responsibility for educating Maryland's students, graduate assistants often have to battle for basic benefits such as stipends, intellectual property rights or family leave.

It is time that graduate assistants be afforded the same collective bargaining rights as other higher education workers in Maryland. And let us be clear, these are "workers" – not simply "students." We thank the sponsor for bringing this legislation forward, and ask for a favorable report of HB 751.

Every AFSCME Maryland State and University contract guarantees a right to union representation.
An employee has the right to a union representative if requested by the employee.
800.492.1996

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