

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 have been with the University of Maryland for one semester now during which time I've worked as a teaching assistant. I spend my time grading assignments and teaching students course material. When I'm not officially working as a teaching assistant I spend my time primarily doing research with my advisor, developing algorithms to solve fundamental problems in the field of computational biology. I like my job, and the reason I support SB118 is precisely that: because it is a job.

Detractors of the right of graduate assistants to collectively bargain tend to argue that it would be bad for graduate workers and for the university system if graduate workers decided to form a collective bargaining unit. That claim may or may not be true, but it's not salient to the issue of whether graduate assistants should have the right to collectively bargain under state law should they choose to do so. Rather, the basic question is just whether graduate assistants are working for the university. The answer is obviously yes.

Prior to coming to Maryland I worked at another university as a research assistant. My day-to-day life in that job was substantially similar to that of my day-to-day life as a graduate assistant, except now I am responsible for teaching the many undergraduates who come to UMD for its nationally-renowned computer science education. It's true that I often learn things in the course of my work-day but, contrary to the university's prior testimony, this does not mean that my job is primarily a part of my education. Rather, me showing up and completing my obligations are essential to providing undergraduates at UMD an education.

Further, the work I and other GAs do in research not only helps to bring in millions of dollars in grant money to the university system every year, but also furthers one of the core missions of UMD: to do groundbreaking research. Without graduate assistants the research that UMD is known for would not be possible. Ask any faculty and they'll tell you the same.

Graduate assistants are workers, and workers deserve the right to collectively bargain. I strongly encourage the legislature to join 48 other states in recognizing this plain fact.

Sincerely,

Tobias Janssen

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