

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'm writing in support of SB 118 Graduate Assistant Collective Bargaining Fairness Act. I am lucky to be a PhD student in Entomology, in a department and lab that generally value my mental health, ability to maintain work-life balance, and ability to support myself during my studies. Having this kind of support lets me focus on my work instead of being worried about whether I'll have time to do it all or whether I'll have enough money to support myself. It lets me take joy in my research and classes. I can see the impact of our typically good working conditions in my fellow graduate students, and it's been backed up yearly by surveys where Entomology has some of the highest satisfaction evaluations of all departments.

But the thing is, this really is just luck. I know that these supportive working conditions aren't true for all graduate students at the University of Maryland. Without the ability to collectively bargain, our individual circumstances are left up to luck in having progressive PIs and department heads. This means that so many graduate students are dealing with the arduous and exploitative dynamics widespread in academia. These conditions don't make for better teachers and researchers. They make it hard for us to flourish and do good work.

Writing from the perspective of a healthy working environment, I firmly believe that allowing collective bargaining, allowing graduate students to negotiate for healthy working conditions, is win-win for UMD and for graduate students. When we can achieve the fair working conditions that all people deserve, we will flourish.

Sincerely,

Maria E. Cramer
PhD Student, Department of Entomology, CMNS
Research Assistant
4005 New Hampshire Ave NW
Washington DC 20011
mec@umd.edu