

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 am writing this testimony to support collective bargaining rights. As a graduate student working for the Department of Mathematics in the University of Maryland, College Park in the past 2.5 years, I feel that we don't have a working environment good enough and are the negligible group in the community. This should not be the case. Graduate students do the teaching, research and other critical works. We should have higher pay, better work conditions, and beyond all this, most importantly, our collective bargaining rights.

I want to address the problem of working environment with the following example. Last summer, I took a position as an instructor of a summer undergraduate course for the Department of Mathematics. The course ran 8 weeks, with a 80 minutes lecture every day, given by me alone. I also needed to assign homework, grade homework, make exams, grade exams and hold office hours. The department only offers a teaching tutor, who is shared by many different instructors. To be fair, the pay is okay, but what I felt most uncomfortable with is that the department has almost no guidelines or assistance during me teaching a whole course! The only thing they provided me is some syllabus from last year and nothing more. Unsurprisingly, they never checked on how the course was going. All these made me feel very isolated, especially since we are in a pandemic and the course I taught was offered online. I don't think this could be considered as a good working environment, and also, is not fair to the undergraduate students who paid such a lot of tuition fees to attend a course which was taught by a young man/woman with few experience and had almost no support from his/her department.

However, although I don't like the working environment and felt pitiful for my undergraduate students, I had no way to ask for more mentoring. I believe this is not a single phenomenon, but our voices could hardly be heard. Without collective bargaining rights, during the 5-6 years of our graduate study, we don't have to argue for a healthier working environment.

Sincerely,

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