

**Written Testimony Submitted to the
Maryland Senate Finance Committee
By Shadi Seyedi khabbaz, Graduate Assistant
SB 247**

**State Personnel - Collective Bargaining - Faculty, Part-Time Faculty,
and Graduate Assistants
February 16, 2023**

FAVORABLE

Dear Chair Griffith, Vice Chair Klausmeier, and Members of the Finance Committee,

I would like to share my struggles as a student in the current economic climate with inflation and the rising cost of living. Finding affordable housing and adjusting my expenses have been a significant challenge. There were times when I even considered dropping out and seeking employment to cover my expenses. However, the challenges are even greater for international students who come to the US on a student visa (F-1) with dependents, as their spouse is not permitted to work. The stipend is barely enough to support a single person, let alone a family, and the lack of collective bargaining makes it almost impossible to negotiate for a raise.

In addition to financial difficulties, I have also heard many accounts of mistreatment and harassment from my friends in the academic community. Some have been forced to work overtime and on weekends, and others have experienced threats of work termination and intimidation, but they have no platform to make their voices heard. I believe that with unionization, they will finally have a voice in the university system, which too often ignores the needs of the instructors, researchers, and administrators who make it all possible.

Sincerely,
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