

**Written Testimony Submitted to the
Maryland House Appropriations Committee
By Calvin Osinga, Graduate Student
HB 493**

**State Personnel - Collective Bargaining - Faculty, Part-Time Faculty, and Graduate Assistants
February 9, 2024**

FAVORABLE

Dear Chair Barnes, Vice Chair Chang, and members of the House Appropriations Committee,

My name is Calvin Osinga and I am a graduate student at the University of Maryland, College Park, where I have worked for 4 years. I call on this committee to issue a favorable report to this Bill. The state already grants the right of collective bargaining towards nearly every other state employee, as well as the faculty at our community colleges and the non-academic workforce at our four-year institutions. It is clear that this right should be extended to all higher ed workers in Maryland.

My work while at UMD entails mostly research, service, mentorship, and teaching. My thesis is on one of astronomy's long-term goals, building a map of the Universe in order to understand the nature of dark matter and dark energy. In my research group, I also serve as the primary advisor to two undergraduates who are working on related projects. Furthermore, I complete service work for the astronomy department, like representing the astronomy graduate students' voice to the department chair and running various events. Beyond that, I also often teach introductory astronomy classes which require 15 hrs/week of work. In total, I would say that I work an average of 60-65 hours per week.

While I enjoy many aspects my work, I have no formal contract that specifies what the department can or cannot ask of me. As a result, I am often solicited for work that doesn't seem to fit into the typical vision of a graduate student, such as administrative and service work. While I am more than happy to contribute to the functioning of my department, the proportion of my workload that has been dedicated to these types of tasks has been increasing. This is very concerning, considering that I have no leverage to deny any requests that the department makes of me at the moment. The professorial faculty provide critical and necessary catalysts for my career in astronomy research (e.g. letters of recommendation, opportunities to present my research, publications) and possess all of the advantages, so disputing any of these requests feels hopeless. The ability to negotiate a formal contract evens the playing field and empowers me to focus on what I arrived at UMD to do: become a better scientist.

Members of the Committee, this state has for decades viewed collective bargaining between state employees and management as the best way to promote democracy in our workplaces and public institutions. The right to collective bargaining has long been recognized as not only a fundamental human right, but also as the best method of ensuring that employee voices play a vital role in constructing conditions that govern our workplaces. It is a right granted to many other public higher ed institutions in the nation, and indeed to many private, prestigious institutions in our own state. The reasons to exempt four-year public higher ed institutions from this path make no sense. I again therefore call for a favorable report to this Bill.

Sincerely,
Calvin Osinga, Graduate Student
Astronomy Department
University of Maryland, College Park
7901 Regents Drive, College Park, MD 20740
calvinosinga@gmail.com

*This testimony has been submitted on behalf of this individual by the University of Maryland Graduate Labor Union (GLU) and the Chapter of the American Association of University Professors (UMD AAUP).
Please contact us at mail@umdgradworkers.org or umdaaup@gmail.com if you have any questions.*