

LEGISLATIVE TESTIMONY

Bill: **HB0493/SB0823 State Personnel - Collective Bargaining - Faculty, Part-Time Faculty, Post Doctoral Associates, and Graduate Assistants**

Organization: Salisbury University AAUP Chapter

Submitted by: Michele Copper, AAUP Member

Position: **FAVORABLE**

SALISBURY UNIVERSITY AAUP CHAPTER SUPPORTS STATE PERSONNEL - COLLECTIVE BARGAINING - FACULTY, PART-TIME FACULTY, AND GRADUATE ASSISTANTS

The Salisbury University American Association of University Professors (AAUP) Chapter **supports** HB0493/SB0823, which would provide the option for collective bargaining rights to all faculty, part-time faculty, post doctoral associates, and graduate assistants employed by institutions of higher education within the University System of Maryland, Morgan State University, and Saint Mary's College.

Faculty are currently exempt from collective bargaining rights. Due to the inability to engage in collective bargaining, we have limited power and ability to advocate for workplace protections that are granted to unionized workers. The COVID-19 pandemic brought the need for workplace protections into the forefront. During the pandemic, faculty had little to no say over decisions made by university administrators in regards to vaccination and masking policies, or the ability to work remotely or in person regardless of their ability or inability to do so due to medical or childcare issues. Faculty were expected to quickly pivot from in-person to fully online learning, resulting in extensive retraining in digital learning platforms without additional compensation or reduction of duties in other areas.

There is significant salary compression of faculty in the system. New faculty are hired at current market rates, while existing faculty do not receive regular pay increases. This results in new faculty who have little teaching experience making a salary similar to seasoned faculty with years of experience. Establishing collective bargaining rights will help reduce salary compression and ensure that faculty receive a fair salary, commensurate with their experience.

Faculty that are full-time, non-tenure track experience inequitable work environments in comparison to their tenure-track peers. Research on our campus finds that there are inconsistent expectations for faculty workload from department to department; that there are confusions regarding their benefits and rights; that full time, non-tenure track faculty lack a clear pathway to attaining tenure-track status; and that full-time, non-tenure track faculty feel that they are "second class citizens" in our campus community, despite often times having the same degrees, training, and experience.

Part-time, contractual, and graduate assistants (who serve in faculty roles) hold tenuous teaching positions. There are significant pay disparities, with part-time faculty being paid less than full-time faculty teaching the same course. Since 2019, Salisbury University has been giving part-time faculty adjuncts COLA raises, however, these raises come from the University's budget, and are subject to University decisions. There is no contract for the COLA increases, but rather a "gentlemen's agreement," which can be revoked at any time. Thus, gaining the ability to engage in collective bargaining would do much to give these teachers greater say over their conditions of employment in ways which reduce treatment of part-time faculty as "second class citizens."

Part-time faculty are employed based on class enrollment. This means that part-time faculty can and do have their classes canceled at the last minute, leaving them without a job. Because teaching requires

intense preparation prior to the first day of classes, this means that part-time faculty whose courses are canceled last minute have already invested time working, without compensation. There is currently no process for these faculty to obtain fair compensation for their labor.

Finally, research from other university systems has demonstrated that granting faculty the option to engage in collective bargaining rights gives a direct benefit to students. This is because faculty who are unionized also effectively barter for improvements in student services. Thus, the right to collective bargaining can improve the student experience by increasing faculty's voice and advocacy for their students.

Salisbury University's AAUP Chapter supports HB0493/SB0823 and believes it would improve working conditions, create more equitable treatment among university faculty, and allow for codification of practices which are currently done at the discretion of good-willed administrators. We request a **FAVORABLE** report in Committee.