

**Written Testimony Submitted to the
Maryland House Appropriations Committee**

By John Macintosh, Lecturer

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 Dr. John Macintosh and I am a lecturer (or professional track, adjunct professor) in the English Department at the University of Maryland, College Park, where I have worked since 2019. Prior to this appointment, I was a graduate student at UMCP and an instructor of record (meaning I ran my own classes from course design to teaching to assessment) on the same campus beginning in 2012. I am here to call on this committee to issue a favorable report to this bill. The state already grants this right towards nearly every other state employee in addition to the faculty at our community colleges and the non-academic workforce at our four year institutions. This right should be extended to the rest of higher education in Maryland.

I generally teach three courses per semester, which is considered 75% of full time equivalent for professional track faculty. When offered to me, I also teach a business writing course in the summer to supplement my contract. This brings my teaching workload to six or seven courses each year. As a lecturer, I generally teach academic writing, which is a foundational course required of students in all majors. In academia, this is what is sometimes referred to as a "service course," meaning that its subject is not related directly to my research-- instead, it helps students hone the skills they need to succeed on writing assignments in their classes in other departments. It's not a dream teaching assignment for most professors, but I enjoy watching my students progress as critical thinkers and persuasive writers. I also teach a wide range of lower and upper division literature courses when possible, as well as the introduction to the English major.

I support this bill because the conditions of my work require that I do. Academic Writing courses are capped at 19 students, which may not at first seem like a lot, but these courses are extremely labor intensive given the amount of writing students are expected to complete and the extensive commentary I am required (and wish) to give on these assignments. The nature of writing instruction necessitates individualized feedback; during a semester with three academic writing courses, I give this feedback on six major assignments for nineteen students in three classes for a total of 342 essays graded. That's not counting lesson planning, teaching, assessing shorter activities, or mentoring. My literature courses are capped at 30 students. Although I am not considered "full time" teaching three courses a semester (and sometimes a summer class) on the professional track, I teach either 1.5 (or 1.75) times the number of classes that tenure track faculty generally teach. For this, I am compensated less. In fact, I have worked part-time in the hospitality industry throughout my graduate and lecturer career to make ends meet. In addition to issues with workload and compensation, being on the professional track means that I work on a yearly contract, which is not guaranteed, and I get paid by the course, the number of which are not guaranteed. Across my campus, these contracts vary by department. They are neither transparent, nor consistent. Instead, they are left to the whims of department chairs, enrollment expectations, and other factors. I have been fortunate with the leadership in my department,

but my professional track colleagues and I shouldn't have to rely on the favor of another to maintain our jobs. Like in many other sectors of the labor market, it is hard to plan a life when you don't know if you'll have work in a couple of months or how much. I like my job. I enjoy teaching our students and watching them grow as thinkers and writers. But my colleagues and I would like to have a voice in our working conditions, which we currently lack. Enacting this bill would allow people like me to have a say. Because they are on contract, many of them are afraid to speak out. I'm not, so I'm going to say it loud: collective bargaining would enable fair compensation, more stability, more dignity, more transparency, and more workplace democracy.

In my view, members of the committee, this is what it comes down to: collective bargaining between state employees and management promotes democracy in workplaces. Collective bargaining is a fundamental right granted to many public institutions of higher education nationwide, as well as private institutions in the state of Maryland. The right is also granted to other educators in the state. This is something that Marylanders already believe. Exempting four year public institutions from this right to have a say in their work isn't working. Employees have a right to play a role in the conditions that govern our workplaces. I therefore call for a favorable report to the bill.

Sincerely,
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*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.*