

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

By Ziad Bentahar

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 Ziad Bentahar and I am Associate Professor at Towson University, where I have worked since 2014. I call on this committee to issue a FAVORABLE report to the bill for collective bargaining for faculty. The state already grants this right towards nearly every other state employee, as well as the faculty at our community colleges and the non-academic workforce at our 4 year institutions. It is clear that this right should be extended to the rest of higher education in Maryland.

At Towson, I typically teach seven college courses per academic year. I teach courses in Arabic and French language and culture at various levels from absolute beginner to advanced fluency. I have also taught first-year seminars to introduced incoming students to the rigors of college work, and a graduate seminar in Global Humanities for Master's students. I am currently teaching a course on immigration with a focus on the Middle East. As a faculty member, I am in the classroom, in direct contact with our rising generations as they seek a public education for a fair chance in society. Previously, I taught college courses at two other Universities in other States, as well as at a third university overseas, for a combined total of two decades of University teaching experience. Therefore, my testimony is informed not only by my work in a public academic institution in Maryland, but also by the broader national and international context of the educational stakes in our State.

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING FOR FACULTY MEANS MORE QUALITY EDUCATION

Our work as faculty requires devoted focus, time, and energy to ensure quality of education and production of knowledge. This makes it impossible to dedicate additional time to communicate effectively with administration. Collective bargaining can strengthen relations between administration and faculty. Collective Bargaining allows us faculty to concentrate on our vocation as educators, educating the people of the State, their children and relatives, their neighbors, coworkers, service providers, and their fellow Marylanders. Just because education is a labor of love, it doesn't mean it's not labor. As such, it deserves the same rights as any other form of labor in America. Collective Bargaining is a basic democratic right that ensures fair working conditions that the faculty deserve, not only because they are literally in the classrooms and labs, deep in the nitty gritty of public education, but also because they are citizens of Maryland deserving of the dignity and ideals of this country.

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING CAN ENSURE WE DON'T RUN OUT OF TEACHERS

While the numbers of students have increased steadily over the years, the numbers of faculty have decreased. Collective bargaining for faculty will create conditions that make the professions of education more attractive for potential future educators. It will ensure that we don't run out of professors. It is the faculty of tomorrow who will enable our

universities to continue to be hubs of knowledge production and scientific innovations, and attract the best and brightest from within our shores as well as beyond. Collective Bargaining safeguards our public universities because it makes the profession of faculty member an appealing job prospect to rising generations of Marylanders preparing to enter the workforce.

LET'S MAKE PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES ATTRACTIVE PLACES TO WORK

Collective bargaining is a right already granted to many other public Higher Ed institutions in the country, and to many private, prestigious institutions in our own State. The reasons to exempt 4-year public institutions from this path just no longer make sense. Our public universities are important to our society for the educational services they provide. They are also opportunities for employment. Let's make them attractive workplaces for the faculty of the future, lest we waste our potential as world leaders in knowledge production.

Please support our educators' right to have the option to organize, and pursue their vocation while having access to fair and transparent workplace conditions. The change Collective Bargaining rights will bring to our State's Colleges and Universities is a positive one. Indeed, it is a vital and urgent one, which will have positive repercussions rippling across our State.

Thank you for your attention.

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.*