

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

By Neel Ahuja, Professor

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,

As the Director of Undergraduate Studies in my department, I can attest to the hard work and daily struggles faced by many of our instructional faculty, especially untenured PTK faculty and graduate student teaching assistants. Many of these instructors take on large loads of teaching, filling their workweeks beyond 40 hours with lectures, grading, and meetings while balancing full lives outside of work. These instructors often don't have control over the types of courses they teach, and are often flexible in suddenly taking on new types of work based on departmental and student needs. It is no exaggeration to say that the University of Maryland would not be able to offer its amazing range of courses and degree programs without these workers, who often develop the closest relationships with students. In example after example from my department alone, I know that the success of individual students (including many students of color and first-generation Maryland students) has been dependent on these faculty and graduate student TAs going the extra mile in advising for careers, professional schools, and other aspects of students' paths. There is no good reason that these workers should be denied the benefits that collective bargaining brings in addressing concerns as varied as workplace safety, pay, and benefits. I have tried to support these colleagues who at times face bureaucratic hurdles to pay and benefits, or difficulty navigating disabilities, in ways that feel alienating for employees. I've witnessed that these workers are sometimes subjected to negative treatment or instances of discrimination, and often feel isolated addressing such issues alone. Collective bargaining is a simple and just pathway for workers to address these issues with their employer. It is a basic and fundamental right that should be accorded to all of our respected teachers.

Sincerely,

Neel Ahuja, Professor

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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.