



# Young Democrats of Maryland

## **HB493/SB823 - State Personnel - Collective Bargaining - Faculty, Part-Time Faculty, Post Doctoral Associates, and Graduate Assistants Appropriations - 2/13/2024 SUPPORT**

Chairman Barnes, Vice Chair Chang, and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on this priority bill for the Young Democrats of Maryland. YDM represents the next generation of Marylanders and seeks to advance policies which will allow Maryland youth to thrive.

Young Dems of MD urged your strong support for HB 493, State Personnel - Collective Bargaining - Faculty, Part-Time Faculty, Post Doctoral Associates, and Graduate Assistants. In the world of higher education, for too long, certain college faculty, and especially post doctoral and graduate students teaching assistants have gone without the right to collectively bargain, and in turn have been unable to negotiate fair wages. Graduate assistants in particular have traditionally made less than a living wage, and this can cause additional stress and financial precarity<sup>1</sup>. At some schools, graduate assistants are not allowed to seek outside employment so they can focus solely on their work. However, it is neither fair, nor ethical, to mandate that students only have one job, when that job does not pay a living wage.

HB 493 grants graduate assistants the right to collectively bargain and negotiate for the fair wages and working conditions they deserve. From fear of gun violence on campus, to the rising costs of housing and food, to the ongoing climate crisis, graduate assistants have enough to worry about. Being underpaid and unable to negotiate for a living wage while pursuing graduate studies should not be another worry.

In recent years, the General Assembly has seen fit to extend collective bargaining rights to additional segments of state employees including at the Office of the Public Defender. It only is fair to extend the same rights to other state employees at public higher education institutions, including graduate assistants and other part time and postdoctoral faculty.

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<https://cnsmaryland.org/2023/03/29/grad-student-stipends-often-fall-short-of-the-living-wage/#:~:text=The%20University%20of%20Maryland%2C%20College,graduate%20students%20felt%20cost%20burdened.>

For these reasons, we respectfully ask for your support for HB 493 and strongly urge a favorable committee report.

Sincerely,

Melissa Bender  
YDM Vice President for Political Affairs  
Chair, YDM Legislative and Policy Committee

Mark Brewster II  
YDM Legislative and Policy Committee