

**Written Testimony Submitted to the
Maryland Senate Finance Committee
By Michele M Mason, Associate Professor
SB0823**

**State Personnel - Collective Bargaining - Faculty, Part-Time Faculty, and Graduate Assistants
March 7, 2024
FAVORABLE**

Dear Chair Beidle, Vice Chair Klausmeier, and members of the Senate Finance Committee,

My name is Michele M. Mason, and I am an Associate Professor at the University of Maryland, College Park, where I have worked for 18 years. I call on this committee to issue a favorable report to this Bill. The state already grants the right of collective bargaining towards nearly every other state employee, as well as the faculty at our community colleges and the non-academic workforce at our four-year institutions. It is clear that this right should be extended to all higher ed workers in Maryland.

I am a professor of Modern Japanese Cultural Studies and serve as the Program Director for the Japanese program. I am also the Japanese Minor Advisor. In a program as small as ours, all tenured faculty must wear many hats to properly support our students. I teach 3 courses each year and serve on many different committees. I often choose committees that will directly support students, such as the one currently revamping the credit system for UMD's living-learning house known as the Language House. I also participated in a committee for a new major, Global Cultures, in order to meet the needs of 21-century students. Although the Japanese Program does not have an MA or Ph.D. program, I am consistently asked to sit on MA and Ph.D. committees because of my expertise. For instance, this semester I will read, comment on, and attend the defense for three graduate students. I find joy in all of these tasks/projects, but how much time they take is often overlooked.

Allowing faculty to join a union would help us convey and discuss the ways our work lives could be properly recognized by the administration and improved in crucial ways. In my case, I would particularly be interested in seeing salaries in the Humanities be on par with our colleagues in the sciences. Also, I would like to see more frank and considered conversations about our workload, which has been considerably increased over the last decade.

Members of the Committee, this state has for decades viewed collective bargaining between state employees and management as the best way to promote democracy in our workplaces and public institutions. The right to collective bargaining has long been recognized as not only a fundamental human right, but also as the best method of ensuring that employee voices play a vital role in constructing conditions that govern our workplaces. It is a right granted to many other public higher ed institutions in the nation, and indeed to many private, prestigious institutions in our own state. The reasons to exempt four-year public higher ed institutions from this path make no sense. I again therefore call for a favorable report to this 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 info@umdgradworkers.org or umdaaup@gmail.com if you have any questions.*