



## Statement of the Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Local 689

SB 823– State Personnel - Collective Bargaining

March 7th, 2024

**TO: The Honorable Pamela Beidle and Members of the Finance Committee**

**FROM: Matthew Girardi, Political & Communications Director, ATU Local 689**

ATU Local 689 strongly supports SB 823 and urges the Senate Finance Committee to issue a favorable report. This bill is the right step for Maryland's institutions of higher education and the working people that make them run day in and day out.

At Local 689, we represent over 15,000 transit workers and retirees throughout the Washington DC Metro Area performing many skilled transportation crafts for the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA), MetroAccess, Fairfax Connector, DASH, and DC Circulator among others. Our union helped turn low-wage, exploitative transit jobs into transit careers. We became an engine for the middle-class of this region.

As such, we know that everyone deserves the right to form and join a union. Whether they be a bus driver, train mechanic, teacher, janitor, or professor, it is a human right to be able to join together with one's coworkers and demand fair wages and conditions in the workplace. As of right now, Maryland already has given collective bargaining and unionization rights to faculty at community colleges as well as the non-academic staff at Maryland's four-year colleges and universities. It only makes sense to grant that right to the academic staff as well.

SB 823 would do just that– requiring the State of Maryland's four-year public colleges and universities to recognize their academic workers' right to unionize and collectively bargain. After all, they are just that: workers. Universities could not run without their academic staff. They, just like any other workers deserve a say in the terms and conditions of employment to make sure that they are fair and reasonable.

Be they post-docs, graduate students, tenured professors, or adjunct faculty, all of the academic staff at a university deserve an equitable seat at the table, especially a public one. After all, healthcare, childcare, housing, groceries, car payments, and insurance costs do not end at the campus gate. All of these workers deserve to have their time, talents, and labor valued as the precious resources they are. We are proud to stand in solidarity with them.

Local 689 thanks Senators Kramer, Benson, Elfreth, Hettleman, Jackson, Kelly, Lam, Muse, Rosapepe, Waldstreicher, A. Washington, M. Washington, and Watson for introducing this powerful measure.