

**Oral Testimony: Submitted to the Maryland House Appropriations Committee**

**SB823: State Personnel – Collective Bargaining – Faculty, Part-Time Faculty, and Graduate Assistants**

**March 6, 2024**

**Position: FAVORABLE**

My name is Shanna Pearson-Merkowitz, I was born and raised in Prince George's County, Maryland and I currently live in Howard County. I have served as faculty at both unionized and nonunion universities. I have also served as an Associate Dean at the University of Maryland College Park. In that capacity, I witnessed a broken system in which faculty and graduate workers were treated very differently depending on their individual ability to self-advocate, the predisposition of their supervisor toward their area of expertise, and perhaps most importantly, their supervisor's knowledge of and interpretation of university policy. When I worked at a unionized university, by contrast, the union ensured that university policies and shared governance practices were meaningful and followed.

Studies empirically find that faculty unions reduce pay inequalities and increase the hiring, [promotion, and retention](#) of women and [faculty of color](#). [Researchers](#) associate the decrease in faculty equity with the fact that unions ensure that there are transparent and consistent hiring, performance, and workload policies and formal processes and representation through which to appeal when a faculty member believes they have been treated inequitably or are being held to a different standard. Further, faculty and graduate workers in unionized schools have a better understanding of the workloads and pay of their colleagues. This [information alone](#) can reduce inequalities created by the fact that some workers negotiate less effectively than others.

The oversight to ensure there are consistent, transparent policies and that there is formal representation is just what a union provides. I urge a favorable report for SB 0823.