

**Written Testimony Submitted to the
Maryland Senate Finance Committee**

By Christina Hanhardt

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,

Greetings. My name is Christina Hanhardt and I am an Associate Professor in the Department of American Studies at the University of Maryland, College Park where I have worked for over 16 years. I am providing this testimony in support of HB 293. The state already grants this right towards nearly every other state employee, as well as the faculty at our community colleges and the non-academic workforce at our 4-year institutions. This right should be extended to the rest of higher education in Maryland.

As a tenured faculty member, I balance work expectations in three areas: research, teaching, and service. Although many assume this order reflects the balance of time spent on each, it is most certainly the reverse: service obligations to our departments, affiliated units, college, and university plus teaching classes and advising undergraduate, graduate, and postgraduate students take up most of my worktime, both during the academic year and extending into unpaid summer months; I often sustain my research agenda in the gaps. This type of workload only increases with one's years at the university, shaped by experience and seniority, of course, but also by factors that foster inequality, including that service assignments are most often determined by the individual discretion of chairs and administrators. One outcome of this current system is a gender-based wage gap: women carry a much higher service load but rank promotion is determined by research productivity and not service record. This would be best remedied if service labor was equitably distributed in a way that a union contract might ensure.

Strategies of individual discretion rather than collective bargaining promote inequality across campus, be it in salary and other benefits granted at hire and/or retention; the distribution of teaching, advising, and service; or staff support offered to departments, programs, and other units. While these specific issues affect tenure stream faculty like me, they also exacerbate the unequal treatment of contingent and professional track faculty and contribute to widespread fear and demoralization. Professional track faculty across campus have significantly higher teaching loads, lower pay, often carry considerable service and advising obligations, but are not eligible to receive many of the merit increases, soft funds, and other types of support that tenure track faculty do; moreover, the pay and work structure for professional track faculty also greatly varies between colleges, departments, and individuals; the lack of standardized work expectations combined with no job security makes contingent faculty scared to speak up when they face exploitation. In the past, I have spoken with a professional track faculty member who indicated that they were too anxious to write in support of bills such as this, concerned that it might affect their future work opportunities. This of course suggests the need for more tenure stream positions, but it also points to the necessity of strong union-backed contracts.

It is for this same reason that graduate student workers also need the protection of collective bargaining. At the University of Maryland, graduate workers do tremendous labor, that, as is the case for faculty, is both related and unrelated to their research. They too not only experience great discrepancies in workload and pay between units and individual

students, but they also have no reliable recourse when individual faculty demand more work than graduate student works are being paid for; when they are onboarded late and are neither paid nor receive health insurance until months into their employment; when they receive work assignments with no time to prepare; or have a change in their original terms of work offer. Existing avenues of complaint are not adequate; I know of too many examples in which "meet and confer" or consulting with the ombudsperson has not only failed to remedy their issues but exacerbated them. The opportunity to organize and bargain collectively is the key to a fair and just workplace.

Extending the right to collective bargaining to all public higher education workers promises to be a win for the state of Maryland and for higher education in general. This is already an established right in other states that are home to the country's top-ranking public research universities, such as California, Michigan, Illinois, Washington, and New Jersey. These universities include existing and aspirational peer institutions for the University of Maryland, as well as fellow members of the Big Ten. They also join many other states, such as Massachusetts, Connecticut, New York, Iowa, Oregon, and our neighboring state of Delaware in recognizing this important right. At these universities, it has been shown that a recognized work force benefits not only workers but also the educational experience of its students and the status of its research record. I served for five years as Director of Graduate Studies in my department, and we lost many of our top graduate student recruits (as well as faculty we tried to recruit) to the University of California, University of Michigan, and Rutgers University, in large part due to the kind of support these schools offer to an organized work force.

If the University of Maryland wants to maintain and improve its status among the ranks of the best universities in this country, it is imperative that it, too, recognize all its workers. And let it be clear that there is no contradiction that graduate students are both students and workers, in this case at the same institution; the contradiction is only that the latter status is denied, eroding the integrity of the university itself. Moreover, our ongoing public health crisis has made it even more visible how important it is that all workers have the right to be active participants in shaping the conditions of their labor. Finally, it is important to emphasize that granting all public sector workers the right to collective bargaining is a racial justice issue - this is the case across the country, but especially so given the University of Maryland's location in Prince George's County and the D.C. Metro region.

It is crucial that states like Maryland stand up and reiterate their long-standing support for all the people who live and work there, and to provide a strong, forward-thinking model that will continue to demonstrate Maryland's status as a leader. If there has ever been a time to do what is right, this is it: we are in a key moment for meaningful political change. Passing House Bill 293 is but one crucial step to help protect workers' rights and invest in the lives of all who live, work, and learn in the state of Maryland. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Christina Hanhardt
7901 Regents Drive, College Park, MD 20740
chanhardt@gmail.com

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.