

**Written Testimony Submitted to the
Maryland Senate Finance Committee
By Conor J. Donnan, Visiting Lecturer
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 Conor Donnan, and I am a lecturer at UMBC, where I have worked for two years. I call on this committee to issue a favorable report on this Bill. The state already grants the right of collective bargaining to 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.

As a professor of American Studies at UMBC, I teach classes on nonviolent social movements, indigenous heritage, and the history of American culture and society. Around 200 to 250 students enroll in my classes each year. My workload involves lecturing multiple times weekly, meeting with students for office hours, advising student organizations, and grading papers and exams. I work with my students on their intellectual and personal journeys because UMBC is devoted to producing well-rounded, compassionate young minds. Over the past few months, I have invested in helping my students engage in productive political dialogue surrounding global issues.

I support this bill because our faculty members are working tirelessly to produce the next generation of leaders in Maryland while balancing their research agenda. UMBC is an R1 university, but our faculty teach a higher workload than comparable schools nationwide. They teach more classes on average, and they have to produce the highest standard of research. Moreover, as a visiting lecturer, I am not entitled to the funding opportunities that my colleagues receive because university policy does not treat visiting faculty as long-term commitments. I front the costs of research and conference presentations, but the university benefits from the success of my work as a teacher and a scholar. These expectations are way above the industry standards for academics, but our faculty has been denied a collective voice to bargain for better conditions.

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. Over the last few years, we witnessed attacks across the nation on higher education funding and the rights of academics, particularly scholars from marginalized communities, but Maryland has an opportunity to build a positive future for higher education. As the wealthiest state in the country, we should demonstrate our commitment to higher education by allowing four-year public higher ed institutions the right to collectively bargain. 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).
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