

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

By Diane Luchese, 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 Diane Luchese and I am a Professor at Towson University. I urge you to vote in support of the current HB0493/SB0823 bills, which would grant collective bargaining rights to faculty, part-time faculty and graduate assistants. I have taught in the University System of Maryland for the past 24 years. As President Joe Biden proclaims: all American workers should have this right. Please consider supporting our basic democratic right.

I consider myself a dedicated employee of the state, and find value and purpose in my work. I work extremely hard and with passion. I am not disgruntled nor discontent, and recognize that problematic situations can arise in any place of employment. That said, the frustrations that are sometimes experienced by faculty and graduate assistants without a means for support or advocacy can raise situations to a level of unfairness.

Some examples I have experienced in my tenure in which the right to collective bargaining might be/might have been advantageous: 1. under the O'Malley administration when state employees were 'furloughed' for a few days during three years, although aware and accepting of the rationale for that decision to lose pay, we were still forced to teach without pay, rendering us unable to make up the pay loss with a temp job; 2. our service 'workload' progressively and subtly increases yearly, often without extra salary compensation, due to a myriad of reasons, often because of insufficient staffing or extra forms/reports to fill out, 3. many years without COLA adjustments whereby salaries have not kept up with inflation; 4. difficulty finding qualified and experienced adjuncts who are willing to work for the low compensation offered; 5. witnessing part time adjuncts often left hanging until the last minute wondering if they will work the next semester; 6. witnessing part-time faculty and lecturers in their precarious employment situation feeling afraid to exercise their rights of academic freedom and free speech, 7. observing the numbers of administrators continually increasing (and receiving high salaries) while the number of tenure track professors and badly-needed support staff have decreased; and 8. experiencing the number of graduate assistantships as far too low to attract a healthy graduate population. I am also concerned that lecturers, adjuncts, and graduate students are often afraid to express their concerns without the fear of losing their positions.

Collective bargaining rights are a necessary step for Maryland university teachers to raise concerns or bring to light injustices, without fear. Our collective voice has been silenced for too long. Collective bargaining would establish a clearer line of communication and complete transparency between faculty and administration. It would favor compromise and negotiation over top-down mandates. It would open negotiating channels for free speech, conflict resolution, debate, fairness, and equity. These rights should not be too much to ask for. Again, I urge you to support HB0493/SB0823.

Sincerely,

Diane Luchese, Professor

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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.*