

Testimony in support of SB 823
Dr. Anne McLeer

March 5, 2024

Dear Chairperson and Membership of the Senate Finance Committee,

You might be surprised when I tell you that there are a group of faculty teaching on the campuses of the University of Maryland who have as much job stability, and enjoy as many employee benefits (that is, none), as Uber drivers. These faculty can earn less than the barista serving coffee in the campus Starbucks for teaching a full load of classes in a year. You might be even more surprised to know that these faculty are 52% of the faculty teaching in higher education in our nation, including in the state of Maryland. They can teach between 40 and 50 percent of students in an institution in any given semester.

I am talking, of course, about adjunct faculty. These are “part-time” faculty who are compensated to teach by the course by the semester, many of whom piece together a living by teaching numerous classes across different institutions. In fact, they have been called “the piece workers of academia.”

These faculty have the same credentials, expertise and teaching experience as our tenure line and tenured faculty. However, they have much diminished working conditions compared to their full-time colleagues despite teaching the same students who pay identical tuition, and who cannot tell from the quality of the education they receive if their professor has substandard working conditions.

Right now, thousands of students in the University of Maryland, are sitting in a classroom being taught by a faculty member they love and want to take more classes from. But if that faculty member is an adjunct, students have no idea or guarantee that their beloved faculty member will ever teach another class in another semester again. Thousands of students have no idea that half their faculty don't have an office to go to after their class, or even the time to meet with students before rushing to another campus to teach another class to make ends meet.

There is no-one directly to blame for this situation, it has been a decades-long creep. However, there is an efficient and grassroots way to solve it. That is, to grant them collective bargaining rights.

For the last 21 years, I have worked organizing adjunct faculty in private and public colleges and universities in DC and Maryland. I have seen that collective bargaining can bring improvements that just don't happen without it. Adjuncts from Georgetown University to Montgomery College have improved compensation, gained access to office space and resources, negotiated job stability and support for professional development through unionization. They have done so without bankrupting or shuttering

institutions. In fact, the adjunct faculty at Montgomery College have had collective bargaining for over 10 years with SEIU Local 500, and the full-time faculty and staff have been bargaining collectively there with their unions for decades. Yet, as you can see, tuition at Montgomery College¹ is on par with that of neighboring Howard Community College² and Anne Arundel Community College³:

Fall 2023 tuition per credit	MC	AACC	HCC
In county	\$134.00	\$124.00	\$142.00
In state	\$273.00	\$291.00	\$265.00
Out of state	\$380.00	\$422.00	\$346.00

The adjunct faculty at the University of Maryland are the last group of these marginalized faculty to lack the right to unionize in the state of Maryland. They deserve that right, as the students of UMD deserve to have faculty who are treated well and equitably.

Thank you,

Dr. Anne McLeer
Director of Organizing
SEIU Local 500

¹ https://www.montgomerycollege.edu/_documents/paying-for-college/tuition/2023-2024-tuition-fee-schedule.pdf

² <https://www.howardcc.edu/admissions-aid/pay-for-college/tuition--fees/>

³ <https://www.aacc.edu/costs-and-paying/credit-costs-and-payment/credit-tuition-and-fees/>