

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

By Joshua Lucker

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 Joshua Lucker. I am a 4th year PhD student at the University of Maryland, College Park. I am calling upon this committee to support this bill that will benefit me and over 75,000 graduate students and countless other university faculty members. Although many graduate students are employees at universities throughout the state of Maryland, we have no say as to our working conditions, salary, benefits, and the like. Graduate students are one of the few employees throughout the state to have collective bargaining rights.

I am a current graduate student who has worked as both a teaching assistant and a research assistant. In my research assistantship, I have worked over 50 hours, being paid for only 20 of those hours. As a teaching assistant, I am often 'TAing', as we call it, over 500 students, grading as many as 80 lab reports a week, holding as many as 4 office hours, and having weekly TA meetings on top of the research mentioned above that is completely unrelated to my teaching; this workload is quite common for people who are TAing in my department, and we often work more hours than paid for. This has caused many mental health issues in my life, including intense anxiety, depression, and thoughts of suicide due to the intense workload. I often TA as many advisors including my own do not have their own money, but it is also a pertinent aspect of our university. TAing is also not guaranteed in my department and many students in my department, which is in the sciences, are often left without a TAship OR RAship.

I support the collective bargaining bill for many reasons. I will be able to have a salary to cover my basic needs, and adequate health insurance of which I have often had severe difficulties obtaining. This would also allow me to decrease my intense TA load listed in the previous paragraph, and will allow me to work only hours in which I am paid for as a TA. This will also bring positive conversations to increase the number of TA positions from my department. This will also break down the growing rift between the university administration and graduate students. I myself have faced much tension with the graduate school due to graduate working conditions that would diminish greatly with collective bargaining, which would lead to more open conversations.

Members of the committee, I have the highest esteem of our state government to make the right decisions for its citizens. Collective bargaining has shown to relieve employer-employee tensions and facilitate open conversations between employees and management. It has been crucial in this aspect for decades, and has shown to promote democracy among workplaces and public institutions. To deny employees the right to collectively bargain is not only to deny a basic right and necessity, but also will lead to increasingly greater rifts between the management and employees at all Maryland public universities. I thus ask again that you make the right decision and vote to approve this Bill.

Sincerely,

Joshua Lucker

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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.