

**Written Testimony Submitted to the
Maryland Senate Finance Committee
By Anna Emenheiser, Graduate Assistant II
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 Anna Emenheiser and I am a Graduate Research Assistant in the Biophysics program at the University of Maryland, College Park, where I have worked for 3 years. I call on this committee to issue a favorable report to this Bill. The state already grants the right of collective bargaining towards 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 education workers in Maryland.

As a graduate research assistant, my work is not always related to my thesis project. I am often called upon to train other graduate students or undergraduate students in various laboratory techniques. Additionally, there are extreme time pressures on the project I am paid for and I often need to sacrifice time on my other thesis projects in order to fulfill deadlines for my assistantship. While research on biological systems often requires extended periods of time, I am expected to have new results for my assistantship every two weeks, if not every week. This is an overall detriment to my progress towards my thesis. Additionally, while I am paid for 20 hours of work per week, these responsibilities often require more than 20 hours.

I support this bill for several reasons. My salary is not fair compensation for the work I perform, especially considering the cost of living in this area. This bill would allow myself and fellow graduate students to lobby for better salaries that are more in line with the quality of work performed and hours required to fulfill requirements. As a woman in STEM, this bill would allow university employees to insist on equal pay for professors of underrepresented genders. This would also enable us to put pressure on the administration to focus on increasing racial and gender representation when hiring new faculty. These issues are important to myself and many others, and this bill addressing collective bargaining would allow faculty and students an independent collective voice to make changes on our own campus.

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. The reasons to exempt four-year public higher ed institutions from this path make no sense. I again therefore call for a favorable report to this Bill.

Sincerely,

Anna Emenheiser, Graduate Assistant II
University of Maryland, College Park
7901 Regents Drive, College Park, MD 20740

aemenheiser@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.