

**Written Testimony Submitted to the
Maryland Senate Finance Committee
By Elizabeth Leininger, Associate 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 Liz Leininger and I am Associate Professor of Neuroscience at St. Mary's College, where I worked from 2013-2017 and returned to work here again in 2023. 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 ed workers in Maryland.

I teach introductory to advanced courses in Neuroscience, supervise student honors theses, conduct research -- often with student research assistants, and perform service to support the governance of my college. In some semesters I have taught nearly 100 students, but I take the time to get to know all of them on a first-name basis. I love the work that I do and the growth and learning I see in my students. But to continue doing high quality work, it is important that my workload and my colleagues' workload is protected and fairly bargained, and that core principles of shared governance and academic freedom are upheld.

I recently moved back to Maryland from Florida. The state government of Florida has brazenly attacked academic freedom, shared governance, and equity on a large scale. These attacks are alarming because academic freedom, shared governance, and equity form the bedrock of independent, strong universities and a thriving democracy. I personally witnessed attacks on these principles at New College of Florida, where I worked -- which is why I moved out of state and found my way back to Maryland.

When I left Florida, I left behind union membership. Yes, Florida has a union for university workers! Via collective bargaining, the United Faculty of Florida helped ensure that educator workloads were bargained fairly and that policies on issues of academic freedom and shared governance were being upheld. When these key principles were not upheld, the United Faculty of Florida union was one of the main bodies that could speak up on behalf of the faculty, allowing us to have a collective voice that benefitted everyone.

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,

Elizabeth Leininger, Associate Professor

St. Mary's College of Maryland
7901 Regents Drive, College Park, MD 20740
elizabeth.leininger@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.*