

Oral Testimony in favor of SB0823 on 3/7 in the Senate Finance Committee Hearing:

Good afternoon Chairwoman Beidle and members of the Senate Finance Committee. My name is Alison Harding and I am a third year PhD candidate in Information Studies at the University of Maryland, College Park and a homeowner in Maryland Senate District 47A.

One of the many misleading points that will be raised by UMD administrators such as Provost Rice is the same point they raise year after year. They tout that we are students first and workers second. That all of us on assistantships are getting valuable and meaningful educational experiences out of the labor we are providing the university. I would add that Provost Rice or whomever she has sent in her stead is here testifying even after being directly requested to refrain from testifying against our right to collective bargaining by the more than 2000 graduate workers who have signed union authorization cards.

The statement that our work is always and solely educational is demonstratively untrue. I am only one of many examples of that. In my three years as a PhD student and candidate I have had two major assistantship assignments. I have provided the university with a convenient substitute for a full time, tenure track subject specialist librarian position while they dragged their feet finding replacements for people who had left their positions. A job, I might add, that I was being asked to do while being paid a stipend for 20 hours a week. And, a job that I was already more than qualified to hold without the degree I am seeking.

The other major assignment I have had is as a research assistant on a \$6 million grant project, funded by this very body, on digital literacy in the state of Maryland. Worthwhile and necessary, but again – not furthering my education. My own research consistently has to take a back seat to work that will not further it.

And I am not alone in providing the university with labor that they like to believe is educational so that they can continue to exploit our labor. Do you really want to agree with administrators when they say that all of our work is educational when you have people like me covering for hiring failures? What about the graduate worker who is an administrative assistant in the Office of Fraternity and Sorority Life, or the graduate worker in facilities? What about the one working in the South Campus dining hall or as a career counselor for undergrads?

These are not isolated incidents, despite the narrative that administrators try to spin. I urge you to listen to not just me and my fellow colleagues testifying but let the pile of over 2000 authorization cards that you see before you hold more weight than the words of administrators who routinely and consciously deny us the respect we deserve. Please find in favor of Senate Bill 0823.