

**Written Testimony Submitted to the
Maryland Senate Finance Committee
By Akanksha Singh, Graduate Student
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 Akanksha Singh and I am a 5th year graduate student at the department of Atmospheric and Oceanic Sciences. 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 have been a research assistant for the last 3 years and help in doing work that goes towards fulfilling grant demands. These state and federal level research grants rely on the tireless efforts of graduate students. A lot of times the work we do towards research grants are not directly going towards our dissertation goals. I also work with the Maryland Department of the Environment to help with the state's effort towards reaching our AQ standards. In the past, I have also TAed undergraduate courses and was responsible for leading discussions for about 100 students.

As a graduate student, I face numerous challenges in pursuing my education and research. These challenges include limited financial support, inadequate healthcare coverage, high levels of stress and mental health concerns, and a lack of representation in decision-making processes.

Enacting this bill into law would provide graduate students with the opportunity to engage in collective bargaining, giving us a voice to advocate for improved financial support, comprehensive healthcare benefits, better mental health services, and increased representation in university governance. This would help alleviate the financial burdens and stressors associated with graduate education, ultimately fostering a more supportive and inclusive environment for graduate students in Maryland.

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,

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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.