

My name is Nicole King. I live in Baltimore city in the 40th district and am a professor in the Department of American Studies at UMBC, where I have worked for 18 years.

The right to collectively bargain for faculty and graduate students is tied to academic freedom, racial and gender equity, and the right to honestly teach the history of this country without fear of reprisal. These issues are especially important right now as troubling battles to dismantle public higher education are occurring across the country. The lack of collective bargaining rights in Maryland disproportionately impacts first generation students, women, and people of color.

When I started as a graduate student in 2001 at the University of Maryland, College Park—where I worked with AFT on organizing my fellow grad students—my annual salary was \$12,000. Today at Morgan State University, a HBCU in Baltimore, graduate students make \$15,000. A union would in no way harm the mentor-mentee relationship, but provide more clarity and transparency at all levels.

As chair of my department at UMBC from 2015-2022, I saw the economics of how graduate students and contingent faculty make the institutions of higher education work without anything near fair compensation or job security.

At UMBC our faculty senate is not a union and does not directly address grievances or pay inequity or compression. This bill will give each individual campus a right to bargain for a more just, fair, and productive academic workplace based on our own specific needs and conditions.

After organizing for collective bargaining rights for USM employees for 23 years, I believe now is the time to pass [SB 823](#). Thank you.