

**Written Testimony Submitted to the
Maryland Senate Finance Committee
By David Van Horn, 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 Dr. David Van Horn and I am a tenured professor in the Department of Computer Science and the University of Maryland Institute for Advanced Computer Studies (UMIACS), where I have worked for 10 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 ed workers in Maryland.

As a professor, I work closely with graduate workers who work either as graduate teaching assistants (GTAs) graduate research assistants (GRAs). The GTAs do the heavy lifting to make my 300+ student undergraduate classes work. Without their labor, these course would be impossible to offer, causing a severe blow to the workforce development vital to the economic prospects of the state. The GRAs are pushing the frontiers of computer science research. Without their labor, the research engine of the university would grind to a halt. These graduate workers have huge workloads, are compensated poorly, and have very little power to influence the working environment at the university. University administrators like to justify these exploitative conditions by saying graduate workers are students and not workers; that is until they want to dictate the work loads and grounds for dismissing graduate workers, as I've seen during my tenure on the Graduate Council. The university cannot have it both ways and the state needs to recognize all workers at the university and grant them their rights to collective bargaining. Together, we all deserve a greater say in our working environment and the shared governance of the flagship public university of Maryland.

I am writing to offer my strongest support for this bill. Strong unions will lead to strong classrooms and the best possible environment for the teaching and research at the core of UMD and other state university's mission.

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 education institutions from this path is absurd, illogical, and anti-democratic. I respectfully, but strongly, 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).
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