

**Written Testimony Submitted to the
Maryland Senate Finance Committee**

**By Harrison Lewis, Graduate Teaching and Research Assistant
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 Harrison Lewis, and I am a PhD student at UMBC, nearing the completion of my research. I also teach two (if not four) discussion sections each semester, usually in Calculus, a subject that the school heavily relies upon. These courses are a mandatory track for almost every technical career offered at our institution, underscoring their critical importance. Through my teaching, I have experienced firsthand the profound impact that my work--and that of my fellow graduate students--has on both the students and the school at large. The myriad functions on campus that depend on a dedicated group of graduate students are too numerous to count. Yet, despite our integral role, many of us are left to contend with financial instability and constant worry.

Throughout my tenure, I have taught numerous students, directly influencing their academic journey and future career paths. The reliance on graduate students to teach such crucial courses highlights not only our value but also the need for recognition and fair treatment. Despite the essential nature of our work, which extends beyond the classroom to encompass diverse research and administrative roles, our contributions are often undervalued, leading to untenable working conditions.

I strongly support the passage of this Bill because it seeks to address these very issues--providing a pathway to improved working conditions, fair compensation, and greater job stability for graduate students and all higher education workers in Maryland. The challenges we face, including inadequate salaries, oversized class responsibilities, and a lack of control over our curricula and workload, undermine our ability to effectively contribute to our fields of study and to the educational mission of our institutions.

By enabling collective bargaining, this Bill would not only rectify existing disparities but also ensure a more equitable, democratic, and prosperous future for all stakeholders in the higher education system. It is essential for fostering an environment where the voices of faculty and students alike are heard and valued, thereby enhancing the quality of education and research across the state.

Members of the Committee, the recognition of collective bargaining rights for public higher education workers is long overdue. Such rights are fundamental to ensuring that all employees have a say in their working conditions and are able to contribute to their workplaces and institutions in meaningful ways. Many other states and prestigious private institutions within Maryland already recognize this right, and there is no justifiable reason for our state's public higher education institutions to lag behind. I urge you to issue a favorable report on this Bill, affirming Maryland's commitment to democracy, equity, and excellence in higher education.

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.*