

**Written Testimony Submitted to the
Maryland Senate Finance Committee
By Clare A Lyons, Associate Professor of History
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 Clare Lyons and I am a professor of history, at the University of Maryland, College Park, where I have worked for 26 years.

I call on this committee to issue a favorable report on this Bill, codifying collective bargaining rights to University faculty. The state already grants this right to nearly every other state employee, as well as the faculty at our community colleges and the non-academic workforce at our 4 year institutions. It is clear that this right should be extended to the rest of higher education in Maryland.

As Professor at the University of Maryland I do the work of a teacher for the State.

Each year I teach 150 undergraduate students in my entry-level courses, teaching critical thinking and analytical writing, as we probe the past and consider its impact on the world we now live in. These courses serve the general education curriculum, with students enrolling across the breadth of majors, from STEM to humanities, the arts and sciences. As students focus their studies on a major, I teach more specialized courses in history, and in gender/women/and sexualities studies. I also instruct graduate students, training the next generation of faculty in the discipline of history, typically working with about 20-25 M.A. and Ph.D. students each year. Like many faculty, I also conduct research, publish books and articles, and provide administrative service in my department and on University committees. My teaching of undergraduates and grad students extends to career support which often leads them to professional training in law, public policy, and government, into academics, and into non-profit work for the public interest.

This teaching work is the very heart of the University. Its core mission is in the hands of teachers like myself, because I have demonstrated the skill and expertise to be entrusted with such work. Surely, teachers like myself are due the basic rights to fair employment, safeguarded by the right to engage in collective bargaining, should we collectively determine to do so.

The right to collective bargaining is a fundamental tenet of a democratic society, and has been responsible for establishing thresholds for safe, fair working conditions since the right was recognized in the early twentieth century. This bill would remove the exemption in Maryland state law, that excludes me, and all teachers at 4-year public institutions, from exercising that right.

There are dozens of reasons for this committee to issue a favorable report, and move this bill to the next stage of consideration. First, is the democratic right for workers to collectively bargain, I have just presented.

I am also concerned about a deterioration of the working conditions, job security, and wages we teachers at Maryland face; and the simultaneous emphasis on non-teaching and

administrative spending that promises to make teachers' working conditions worse if they are allowed to continue. Collective bargaining, and even the possibility of such collective action, would bring teachers into the discussions that set these priorities.

Here are just a few troubling trends:

I. Teaching faculty at UMD has shifted from tenure-track Professors, to lower paid, lower status, ranks for teachers, who do the majority of the teaching.

There are currently 1,339 tenured and tenure-track faculty at UMD - These teachers have job security (after 6 years' probation that it takes to earn tenure), that is intended to protect freedom of speech and open discourse and inquiry in research, fundamental to the University's mission. We enjoy the best working conditions, although at lower salaries and poorer benefits than that of our peer institutions at public University nationally.

We have 3,392 "professional track" faculty (PTK) - These teachers were not offered tenure track jobs after earning the Ph.D., earn low wages, and have limited job security, working on short multi-year contracts, ranging from 1 to 5 years. These are the teachers who do the huge majority of the teaching, because the University has made a policy decision to privilege hiring teachers into these ranks, rather than the traditional tenure track.

My PTK colleagues have a teaching work load that is double that of my own, and are thus often unable to conduct research and publish. They are poorly paid. They have no long-term job security. Without tenure they are vulnerable to all the hardships tenure is meant to mediate against.

We also employ part-time faculty, currently approximately 900 at UMD, who work under truly deplorable conditions. These teachers also have earned Ph.D.'s in their field, and have to perform at a high standard as teachers. They are hired semester to semester, like seasonal farm workers, with no job security, paid by the course, typically \$5,000. If they can secure the equivalent teaching load as those at PTK ranks (so 4 courses each semester), they earn \$40,000. Most are cobbling together fewer courses, often working for several different schools in the UM system. And they too are doing the important work of teaching our University students.

This means that 76% of faculty position at UMD are held by non-tenure track faculty, with employment conditions well below those that I, as a tenured faculty member, enjoy. This is not a tenable path forward. We have already seen a trend of the "best and the brightest" making the decision not to go into higher education because it is becoming a non-professional career, poorly paid, without the opportunity to do the important original research that moves our society forward.

Over the twenty-six years I have taught at the University of Maryland, this shift from traditional tenure-track faculty to various levels of temporary, non-tenured faculty has escalated to the point where it is a crisis for the future of higher education. Removing the impediment to collective bargaining by moving this bill forward would give teachers, as state workers, a way to counter this troubling trend.

II. Spending priorities made by the University administrators have favored non-teaching arenas, particularly management.

Since 2015 expenditures on management have increased 50%, significantly increasing salaries, while also adding to the numbers of positions dedicated to administration and not teaching.

In that same period the number of students we serve have increased (by 16% since 2014) and

the number of full-time faculty risen by just 3%. More and more of those faculty positions have been filled with lower paid, PTK and part-time teachers, as explained above.

Teaching now accounts for 28.7% of UMD's budget, with another 24.5 % of the budget supporting research.

Faculty currently have no seat at the table in setting priorities or even presenting our experience. This bill would allow us to make use of collective bargaining to change this.

III. UMD faculty salaries are negotiated within the academic unit at the time of employment, and increases (when possible) likewise leveraged by the individual. There are no step increases for faculty who are adjudged to achieved merit in performance reviews, unlike many universities that have such policies. Unsurprisingly, this leads to special treatment and inequities.

In the absence of clear and consistent administration of employment conditions such as salary and workload, discrimination, bias, and preferential treatment takes place. I have experienced this and witnessed it among my colleagues.

I recently served on the internal review committee for my department to evaluate the current status on diversity, equity and inclusion. In that capacity I and another faculty member wrote a survey, for all members of our teaching faculty, to contribute information on their experiences, relating to DEI, anonymously. The majority recorded that they had experienced what they understood to be discrimination or bias in interaction with colleagues and administrators. The specifics ranged from inappropriate comments to inequities in workload and compensation. Sensitivity training and DEI education can redress the insensitive/bias comments; but the issues concerning workload and compensation are the result of having no clearly articulated, uniform, predictable, and enforceable standards.

Here too, the possibility of collective bargaining could encourage equitable treatment.

The state of Maryland has a long history of support for fair, equitable, employment and standing with workers to ensure our voices are part of the conversation as we face difficult issues. The right to collectively bargain is essential for those traditions to continue. I ask that you stand with the University teachers and support this Bill.

Sincerely,

Clare A Lyons, Associate Professor of History
History
University of Maryland, College Park
7901 Regents Drive, College Park, MD 20740
clyons@umd.edu

*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.*