

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

**By Dr. AJ Baca, Professor/ President of MC-AAUP Chapter
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,

I am Dr. A. J. Baca and I am a Professor at Montgomery College. The full-time faculty (FTF) at Montgomery College (MC) have been organized and represented by the AAUP national labor group for over 40 years. Up until recently, the MC-AAUP has been the only FTF labor group in higher education with collective bargaining rights in Maryland. So, we are fortunate but proud to play a positive and integral role in the governing process at our institution. In doing so, we complement the decision-making process with our Shared Governance groups in a collaborative solution-oriented effort at MC. This directly impacts students and academics at our institution.

How is our Labor Group different than what you see on TV?

- We cannot and do not strike and do not negotiate in the media;
- We do not publicize internal matters except for verified extreme circumstances;
- We do collaborate constructively, regularly, and effectively with Management to be part of the solution.

What is our overall charge?

- Engage, inform, and mobilize constituents, but also hold them to account to protect the Contract;
- Negotiate terms of the (FTF) contract including compensation, benefits but we also discuss working conditions, and negotiate things like office hours and policy related to online learning, but are also a means of constructive dialogue across the college;
- Protect the Contract by utilizing embedded formal / informal collaborative resolution strategies;
- Serve as checks and balances related to hiring practices, dismissals, and various decisions that impact faculty and / or our work;
- Navigate the grievance process, serve as an informal mediator, find common ground solutions, and work to actually avoid grievances whenever possible;
- Resolve compensation disputes. If our faculty are asked to do work over the summer without compensation, we ask why, when that is contrary to verified policy. But we would do so respectfully and in the interest of finding truth to justify our compensation ask and work to find long term resolutions;

- We meet formally and informally with Management and our Shared Governance groups to discuss issues that arise and to determine an appropriate path forward. In the absence of a binding contract, the role of Shared Governance in terms of faculty input and real change would be quite limited and confined to the ultimate objectives of Management, through their lens. Still, we often collaborate with our Faculty Council when there is overlap, but we stay in our lanes and complement each other quite well.

How do we support students and the institution?

- Testify at County Council Budget Hearings each year to advocate for MC and our students;
- Proudly attend national labor group meetings to share and gather information about our Mission and collaboration efforts with Mgmt.;
- Support faculty and their right to academic freedom, which enhances the educational experience for students and affords students the right to choose classes that suit their needs /interests;
- During the pandemic, we approved the transfer of unused travel funds for 2 years to an emergency student fund to help students who lost jobs and needed assistance with housing, medical care, or food;
- Contribute to MCAAUP scholarship fund to support several students each year;
- We give faculty a voice and in doing so afford Management the opportunity to make informed decisions, solve problems they may not be aware of, and help to create a sense of community engagement through forums and focus groups.

Most faculty understand Mgmt. prerogative. They do not need to have the final say - they just need to have A SAY, and be heard. With a binding contract in hand that can leverage real change, we can help to ensure consistency and equity across the institution. This affords our Chapter the opportunity to play a critical role across our institution, and we are proud of our contributions.

We do not always agree with Mgmt. and things are not perfect, but we have healthy and productive mechanisms in place to address those differences. At the end of the day, we recognize that one of the most effective ways to support our members includes advocating for a strong and healthy institution and we proudly do so.

To close, on behalf of the FTF at Montgomery College, we humbly but proudly submit this testimony in support of our colleagues at 4-year institutions in higher education across Maryland in their efforts to gain the right to organize, collectively bargain, and advocate for their respective constituents. We know that they can too be part of the solution that moves their respective institutions forward in a similar collaborative and constructive manner. Thank you!

Sincerely,

Dr. AJ Baca, Professor/ President of MC-AAUP Chapter
Health Sciences
Montgomery College
7901 Regents Drive, College Park, MD 20740
aj.baca@montgomerycollege.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.*