

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

By Jesse Lee Brooks, Lecturer

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 Jesse Brooks, and I am a lecturer at the University of Maryland, where I have worked for seven years teaching fiction, a course on writing about the environment, and a variety of others, despite that they are often not in my direct field. I call on this committee to issue a favorable report to this Bill. The state grants this right towards nearly every other state employee, as well as the faculty at our community colleges and the non-academic workforce at our 4-year institutions. This right should also be extended to the rest of higher education in Maryland.

For most non-tenured faculty, we entered our graduate degrees with the belief that if we worked hard enough, we could succeed into financially stable tenured positions. It's safe to say that we have done this, we have worked as hard as we possibly could, and yet we remain overworked and underpaid. I have done so for ten years now. I have done my best to write and research and publish to qualify for a tenured position while teaching two to four times the number of courses tenured faculty teach. Tenured positions support academics in their research and writing by offering less courses, higher pay, and paid sabbaticals. When non-tenured faculty devote time to their own work, it fills us with anxiety and dread, because the more time we devote to our writing and research, less time is given to our excessive teaching load. Focusing on advancing our careers puts our very positions at risk when we are, in the present, prevented from teaching as well as our more privileged counter parts with such an unbalanced number of course. And so non-tenured faculty like me are trapped in a catch-22 devised by an apathetic administration looking to tamper costs.

Our situation has become so bad, that myself and many colleagues (who I will not name in order to protect them) often do not read our teaching reviews. This is not because we have lost our passion; rather, we are simply all too aware of what our problem is: we do not have enough time. Teaching a hundred students each semester makes it logistically impossible to offer them the quality education they deserve. The added stress placed on me as someone living with bi-polar disorder manifests in physical symptoms for which I am currently taking added medication for. This of course further impacts my teaching and has stretched me to the point where I can literally do no more, physically, mentally, nor intellectually. Teachers like me live every day with a personal defeat fashioned by someone else, and yet we are the ones forced to take the blame as the recipients of student review while the administration operates with impunity. Reading my reviews is simply too painful when there is literally nothing I can do to help my students nor myself.

Again, I am calling for a favorable report to this Bill. Members of the committee, collective bargaining is a fundamental human right that is granted to many other public higher ed institutions in the county, and indeed to many private, prestigious institutions in our own state. The reasons to exempt 4-year public institutions from this path does not make sense, and I ask that you please consider making this change. I can assure you that my situation is not dissimilar from many of my colleagues. I hear these stories from other co-workers every day. We did not choose these careers based on money, but to mentor and educate the public,

and we cannot do our jobs adequately if much of our focus is on literally surviving. We end up failing our students and therefore ourselves for being unable to achieve our purpose in life, and we are currently powerless to end this vicious cycle.

Thank you for reading.

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.*