

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

**By James "Ward" Morrow, Labor Union Attorney/Adjunct Labor Law 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 James "Ward" Morrow, and I call on this committee to immediately 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.

This right should be extended to all higher ed workers in Maryland and should have been done so years ago when it was extended to state employees. Although I am a practicing labor attorney, 24 years in public sector labor law, I do not enjoy the rights that I teach my students about in almost all other public sector worksites and K-12 teaching positions. Even in my day job, the lawyers, and most all non-management staff, all enjoy the benefits of collective bargaining and a union contract.

This is not my great grandfather's labor movement. The steel mills of old have essentially closed, but the Maryland Public Defenders Office lawyers, and many other professional employees, now carry a union card. While I am fortunate to have a day job with many benefits, many adjuncts do not. They are forced, due to exceedingly low wages, to teach as many classes at as many institutions as they can. For the most part, we have doctorates or other professional degrees, but have no or limited tenure, unaffordable health insurance, and no retirement as there is generally nothing left to put into a 401k. This is not sustainable, and we cannot keep balancing the state budget on the backs of frontline higher education professionals.

Unions advocate for better wages and working conditions, this translates into attracting the best teaching applicants, and ultimately to the most highly sought after professors and instructors. The reputation of higher education institutions leads jurisdictions to being competitive in economic develop, in turn making businesses in Maryland more profitable. It's not a coincidence that states with the lowest unionization rates have lower levels of literacy.

For those concerned about diversity, equity, and inclusion, I am reminded of my friend Congressman Eligh Cummings who was a keynote speaker at an American Federation of Teachers-Maryland conference years ago. He asked us to look around the room. We lived in different neighborhoods, attended different places of worship, represented many different ethnic groups and backgrounds. He noted that almost nowhere else in many folks lives will they experience such diversity on a daily basis than in a union, where all such folks come together with common interest to improve the wages and working conditions of its members. And in the educational field, we want to continue to attract our better angels, allow them to live in dignity, and focus on the critical mission of instructing our next generation.

They should not be focused on barely having enough money to pay healthcare premiums or having any money left over for a retirement. Without a union, who is left to stand up for instructors when the book banning crowd arrives, who will represent them if they are

improperly accused, will they have any rights at the worksite?

This may not seem like my great grandfather's labor movement, but he'd certainly recognize the similar concerns with wages and working conditions. Please do not play cross over timing type games with this important bill. It should have passed years ago, it should have passed last year, it needs to pass immediately.

There is nothing left to study, there is no need for lengthy debate as this is nothing more than other state employees and k-12 teachers already have. Si se puede!

I again therefore call for a favorable report to this Bill. Vote YES!

Sincerely,

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*This testimony has been submitted on behalf of this individual by the University of Maryland
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