

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 661

State Personnel – Collective Bargaining – Faculty

APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE March 4, 2025

Thank you, Chair Barnes, Vice Chair Chang, and members of the Appropriations Committee, for your serious consideration of House Bill 661, which would extend collective bargaining rights to faculty within the University of System of Maryland (USM), Morgan State University, and St. Mary's College of Maryland. My name is Adam Schneider. I have worked as both an adjunct and contract faculty at the University of Maryland School of Social Work (UMSSW) in Baltimore (UMB), and currently hold a (full-time non-tenure-track) rank of Clinical Associate Professor. **I offer this testimony in strong support of HB 661 because faculty across the USM, at Morgan State University, and at St. Mary's College - like all other state workers¹ - deserve collective bargaining rights.**

HB 661 addresses gaps and failures in the current “shared governance” model. I have sought to engage meaningfully in “shared governance”: I am an active member of numerous faculty committees at the UMSSW, a member of UMB's Faculty Senate, and a member of the Council of University System Faculty (CUSF) and its legislative affairs committee. “Shared governance” has a role; in many contexts and on many issues, however, the role of faculty in “shared governance” is merely advisory. Some important questions – such as budgetary matters and employment conditions – are rarely if ever raised with faculty “shared governance” bodies. It is, therefore, unsurprising that CUSF has voted overwhelmingly for at least a decade and a half to adopt resolutions in support of the expansion of collective bargaining rights. HB 661 not only provides faculty of all ranks the ability to sit across the table and speak with university administrators; it will encourage these administrators to listen and respond to the concerns and needs raised by faculty.

Challenging political and budgetary times make HB 661 more urgent and necessary. We understand that the State, the USM, and our campuses face a challenging political and budgetary environment. Bargaining rights – indeed any rights – should not depend on the finances of employers, which change over time. Real and robust engagement of all stakeholders is needed when difficult decisions may need to be made. Such engagement is not only just, it leads to better outcomes and more ownership. Unions have been the most powerful countervailing force against recent federal attacks - of all kinds. The State of Maryland and the USM should want a strong and independent faculty voice – made possible through unions protections - that can be a bulwark to protect our students, our institutions, and our stated values.

HB 661 responds to changes in the workforce and higher education, which increasingly rely on so-called “contingent” workers. Such workers make up a larger and larger percentage of the U.S. economy. In the years following the Great Recession the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) estimated that 40% of the U.S. workforce was contingent.² A significant – and often overlooked – sector that has seen a dramatic increase in the size of its contingent workforce is

¹ Maryland Department of Budget and Management (n.d.) Collective bargaining in Maryland.
https://dbm.maryland.gov/employees/Pages/CB_Home.aspx

² U.S. Government Accountability Office. (April 20, 2015). Contingent workforce: size, characteristics, earnings, and benefits. Available at <https://www.gao.gov/assets/670/669899.pdf>.

academia. In fact, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics finds that almost one-third of contingent workers are within education and health services industry.³ The makeup of the academic workforce has changed substantially. Today, there are far more contingent full- and part-time faculty than full-time tenured appointments.⁴ According to the GAO, “These contingent workers are also more likely than standard workers to experience job instability, and to be less satisfied with their benefits and employment arrangements than standard full-time workers. Because contingent work can be unstable or may afford fewer worker protections depending on a worker’s particular employment arrangement, it tends to lead to lower earnings, fewer benefits, and a greater reliance on public assistance than standard work.”⁵

Many contingent and adjunct faculty members struggle to make ends meet. The American Community Survey found that nearly one-third of part-time faculty live near or below the federal poverty line, and the UC Berkeley Labor Center found that a quarter of families of part-time faculty are enrolled in at least one public assistance program like food stamps and Medicaid, or qualify for the Earned Income Tax Credit.⁶ The Chronicle of Higher Education found “a large portion of universities and colleges limit their adjuncts’ hours to avoid having to provide health insurance now required for full-timers under the Affordable Care Act.”⁷

With HB 661, USM and its institutions will join many other universities both locally and nationally to extend collective bargaining rights – including at the University of Michigan, the University of Illinois, and the University of California. The University of Wisconsin, my alma mater, has had faculty (and graduate student) collective bargaining rights for decades. The protections and voice that such rights provide only strengthen the university’s teaching, research, and community.

I strongly urge a favorable vote on HB 661, and greatly appreciate your time and consideration.

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³ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (May 2017). Industry of contingent and noncontingent workers, percentage distribution. Available at <https://www.bls.gov/spotlight/2018/contingent-workers/home.htm>.

⁴ American Association of University Professors. (Jan 28, 2025). IPEDS academic workforce: Makeup of the academic workforce, by type. Available at <https://data.aaup.org/academic-workforce/>.

⁵ U.S. Government Accountability Office. (April 20, 2015).

⁶ Frederickson, C. (Sept 15, 2015).

⁷ Dunn, S. (Apr 22, 2013). Colleges are slashing adjuncts’ hours to skirt new rules on health-insurance eligibility. Chronicle of Higher Education. Available at <https://www.chronicle.com/article/colleges-are-slashing-adjuncts-hours-to-skirt-new-rules-on-health-insurance-eligibility/>.