

**Written Testimony Submitted to the
Maryland House Appropriations Committee**

By Dr. Donna J. Satterlee

HB0661

State Personnel - Collective Bargaining - Faculty

March 4, 2025

FAVORABLE

Good afternoon Chair Barnes, Vice Chair Chang, and members of the House Appropriations Committee,

My name is Dr. Donna J. Satterlee, I was a tenured associate professor at the University of Maryland Eastern Shore for the last 22 ? years in the Department of Human Ecology, School of Agricultural and Natural Sciences. Sometimes I was required to drive to Chesapeake College to teach on their campus (2 hours driving time) for a 3-credit class and as well as to teach my other 10 credits on the campus in Princess Anne. Most of the time I was the lowest paid person in the department and had the heaviest teaching load.

I stand before you to present my testimony in fervent support of Senate Bill 750 and House Bill 661, which aim to grant four-year college faculty in Maryland the right to unionize. This legislation is a significant step towards ensuring fair labor practices, fostering a collaborative academic environment, and upholding the values of equity and justice within the higher education sector.

While I was teaching at UMES, in the School of Agricultural and Natural Science, Department of Human Ecology, I usually had between 7 and 15 students in each of my classes, a few of which were joining the course online as a cohort of non-traditional students who were my advisees, from Chesapeake College. I had to accommodate the non-traditional students on-line while I was teaching my traditional students in class. Bargaining would have helped me develop the fully online program for my child development students much sooner since I had sent a request in 2019 to discuss an online program with the chair (it finally began in fall, 2025 as 8 week courses, which does not help with more weekends available for doing homework). I had asked my chair, I could develop the program, since the Assistant State Superintendent of Early Childhood had asked me to do so, since we were working on the BluePrint for Early Childhood since the desire was to increase the education level of the teachers in childcare settings. I had not gotten a response from my first email to my chair, so I tried again.

My second cohort of students from Chesapeake had entered in 2013, with the promise of being able to graduate in December of 2015 as part of a two plus two agreement. The then chair, had changed the catalog in 2014 and added a few more credits to the requirements, which caused a bit of confusion. The then chair had wanted the cohort to graduate on the new catalog, when the cohort had not been asked if they wanted to change catalogs, and stay and extra semester. I was spending two hours twice a day, to drive to Chesapeake College to deliver face to face 3 credit classes, on top of my other 10 credit classes each semester, and 3 to 5 credit classes for the summer internship program.

Instead of a response from the current chair for the request to discuss an online program, I became targeted by the current chair for daring to support the second cohort of students (as said by the registrar's office that I supported the students) who had to bring in a senator so that the department would allow the students to graduate on the course catalog that they matriculated on, which is the law. I had no ombudsman, nor could I report that to anyone at the time, since there was nowhere to report the many incidences of bullying and racism toward

me. I was not even able to be allowed to discuss the possibilities of online courses before the pandemic hit and I had already managed to have the faculty assembly have online meetings, with the help of a librarian, so that people at a distance could attend the meetings.

We need to reverse the attacks on faculty by having the possibility of bargaining. I know of two other HUEC faculty members who are now being targeted, on top of 5 others who were targeted and left before I was targeted. I was known on campus for supporting the students and I received a student choice award (2020-2021) for doing so. If I had had a supportive environment for me, I would have been able to have many more students get a four-year degree much sooner, since there was a grant that I ran from the state that supported the essential childcare teachers with books, tuition and college fees. I brought in over 1 ? million dollars into the college from the state CCCPDF grant as it was. I would have been able to run my research, and get published in an academic journal again, instead of being overloaded and attacked vindictively by the chair of Human Ecology who had to clean up the mess left by a previous chair in her efforts to keep the students one more semester. This last year, when the online program funded by lawsuit money, finally started, I was not allowed to advertise our program (and I had another faculty member post on Tuesday Tidbits without asking). The technology was developed enough in 2014, to make an online program happen, but I could not get support for my students to increase their level of education, even when I had been able to get a grant, and have it awarded to the school, to pay for the process of feasibility and development of courses from the State Dept. of Education in 2014. There are something like 40 online students (mostly transfer students) who matriculated in fall 2025, in the program, as opposed to the current 10 students (freshman to seniors) in face to face classes.

The Importance of Faculty Unionization

Unionization among faculty members in four-year colleges is critical for several reasons. First and foremost, it empowers educators to have a collective voice in negotiating their terms of employment, including salaries, benefits, and working conditions. This empowerment is fundamental to ensuring that faculty members can focus on their primary mission: educating and mentoring students.

Furthermore, faculty unions can play a pivotal role in advocating for better resources for teaching and research, thus enhancing the overall quality of education. When faculty members have a platform to express their concerns and suggestions, it leads to a more dynamic and responsive academic environment. It allows for shared governance, which is not happening. We have a totalitarian, authoritarian environment right now.

Addressing Inequities and Ensuring Fair Compensation

One of the most compelling arguments for allowing faculty unionization is the need to address inequities in compensation and working conditions. Currently, disparities exist not only between faculty members within the same institution but also across different institutions within the state. Unionization provides a mechanism for standardizing compensation packages, ensuring that all faculty members receive fair pay and benefits commensurate with their qualifications and experience.

Moreover, unions can advocate for adjunct and part-time faculty members, who often face precarious employment conditions and lack access to essential benefits. By extending union protections to all faculty members, we can create a more inclusive and equitable academic community. By the incessant bullying by my chair, I was forced to resign from my full-time job, and luckily I was able to get a job as an adjunct professor at another university, in a doctoral program, with very little pay per credit. Starting over at 68 years old is difficult.

Enhancing Academic Freedom and Shared Governance

Academic freedom is the cornerstone of higher education, allowing faculty members to pursue innovative research and teach controversial subjects without fear of retribution. I had tenure, and I was fearful of the chair's vindictiveness and retribution, and lost my academic freedom at UMES because of planned, premeditated, and fanciful attacks by the current chair of Human Ecology. Unionization strengthens academic freedom by providing a structured process for addressing grievances and protecting faculty members from unjust dismissal or punitive actions. My teaching was fine, so the dismissal was unjust, and punitive actions were taken against me because the chair had chosen to distort the facts, fabricate lies, and abuse the process, with no chance or mediation. An underling cannot bully a supervisor, while a supervisor can bully an underling and she did, as well as accuse me of actions that were not substantiated. A supervisor can choose to discriminate against various faculty because she can. I did not deserve the treatment by the chair, which was extremely painful, not only to me, but to my students for my loss as their professor. There are currently two other white faculty members that are being harassed by the chair, and five faculty members left because of the chair's treatment of them. Another one is on the fence and is applying for other positions at other universities.

In addition, faculty unions can promote shared governance, ensuring that educators have a meaningful role in institutional decision-making processes. This collaborative approach fosters transparency, accountability, and a sense of ownership among faculty members, ultimately leading to more effective and sustainable policies. Currently, the Human Ecology Department keeps everyone in their own silos and actively discourages conversations between the various faculty members. Literal and figurative doors are shut. Gaining support from a union would be helpful.

Supporting Student Success

The benefits of faculty unionization extend beyond the faculty members themselves; they also positively impact students. When faculty members have stable and fair working conditions, they are better equipped to dedicate their time and energy to teaching, advising, and mentoring students. This, in turn, enhances the overall student experience and contributes to higher retention and graduation rates.

Furthermore, faculty unions can advocate for policies that prioritize student needs, such as smaller class sizes, improved facilities, and increased funding for academic programs. By working together, faculty and administrators can create an environment that supports student success and fosters a culture of excellence, rather than a culture that creates hostility and competitiveness instead of synergetic collaboration toward a greater good.

For example of improving facilities, my classroom in 1142 ECRC had a sticky floor from uncured tile adhesive, after the last flood that flooded my classroom, which had a broken projector screen, with condensation stains, a noisy heater that made it impossible for my hearing impaired student to hear me, and a projector that did not project with enough light to compete with late afternoon sunshine. I had put in many requests for service, but it was not until I took a picture of a student's boots with brown, sticky ooey gooey glue that anything improved.

Conclusion

In conclusion, passing Senate Bill 750 and House Bill 661 to allow four-year college faculty in Maryland to join a union is a vital step towards promoting fairness, equity, and excellence in higher education. By granting faculty members the right to unionize, we empower them to advocate for their professional needs, enhance the quality of education, and ultimately benefit students and the broader academic community. I urge you to support this legislation and help create a more just and equitable future for higher education in Maryland.

Members of the Committee: The State of Maryland has for decades viewed collective bargaining between state employees and management as the best way to promote democracy in our workplaces and public institutions. The right to collective bargaining has long been recognized as not only a fundamental human right, but also as the best method of ensuring that employee voices play a vital role in constructing conditions that govern our workplaces. It is a right granted to many other public higher ed institutions in the nation, and indeed to many private, prestigious institutions in our own state. The reasons to exempt four-year public higher ed institutions from this path make no sense, other than to keep a highly skilled, and highly intellectual group silent. I again therefore call for a favorable report to this Bill.

Sincerely,

Donna J. Satterlee
Home Campus: University of Maryland Eastern Shore
School of Agricultural and Natural Science
donna.j.satterlee@gmail.com

This testimony has been submitted on behalf of this individual by the United Academics of Maryland.