

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

By Derek Willis, Lecturer

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 Derek Willis and I am a lecturer at the Philip Merrill College of Journalism at the University of Maryland-College Park, where I have worked for four years. I call on this committee to 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. It is clear that this right should be extended to all higher education workers in Maryland.

I teach multiple classes a semester, typically on topics such as data analysis, artificial intelligence and statistics within the context of doing journalism. Much of the funding for my position comes directly from the legislature's investment in education on these critical topics, and I am grateful for the opportunity to help Maryland students develop the skills they will need in an increasingly complex and data-driven society. I love my job, my colleagues, and my students. I wish that every lecturer on campus had the situation I do, but the truth is that too many of them have more and larger classes every semester, too little support, and no real voice in the institution. Lecturers and adjunct faculty in particular are workhorses who ensure that students receive the broad general education that the university provides, and they are the most at-risk in terms of their employment and working conditions. When I started working at UMD, I signed a three-year contract that specified my teaching load and other terms. I currently do not have an active contract - an oversight that I know is not the result of bad faith or intent, but the result of a system that is built on a lack of real shared governance. It shouldn't be this way. Faculty should be able to rely on a consistent set of working conditions that are agreed upon, spelled out and written down. That's actual shared governance.

Your support for this bill is a critical step in that direction. You can provide faculty with a real, independent voice in their future, and you can help ensure that USM students are getting the instruction they need from faculty who can rely upon the stability that collective bargaining can provide. I love almost everything about my job, and I would like all of my colleagues to be able to say the same. But that's not the reality right now, and the impact on Maryland and Marylanders is real. Particularly at a time when higher education - public education itself - is under attack, we need a collective voice that can show why the investments the legislature makes in the state's colleges and universities is so important.

My request to you is simple: this state has long favored collective bargaining between public employees and their management as a necessary - essential - component of our shared civic life. There is no good reason to exclude the faculty of four-year public colleges and universities from this opportunity to have a meaningful voice in their own institutions. I ask that you favorably report this Bill, and support its ultimate passage.

Sincerely,

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