

**Written Testimony Submitted to the
Maryland House Appropriations Committee
By Ziad Bentahar, Associate Professor**

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 Ziad Bentahar, and I currently work as an Associate Professor at Towson University, where I have taught since 2014. I urge this committee to issue a favorable report on the bill for collective bargaining rights for faculty. The state already grants this right to nearly every other state employee, as well as to faculty at community colleges and non-academic staff at four-year institutions. It is time that faculty at Maryland's public universities are granted the same rights. At Towson, I teach six to seven courses each academic year, covering Arabic and French language and culture at all levels, first-year seminars, a graduate seminar in Global Humanities, and a course on immigration with a focus on the Middle East. With nearly two decades of experience teaching at universities in the U.S. and abroad, my perspective is informed by both my current work in Maryland and by broader educational contexts. *Collective Bargaining Enhances the Quality of Education* Faculty work demands focus, time, and energy to ensure high-quality education and knowledge production. However, without collective bargaining, engaging effectively with administration becomes increasingly difficult. Collective bargaining would strengthen relationships between faculty and administration, allowing us to focus on our core mission--educating Maryland's citizens. Education is a labor of love, but it is also hard work that deserves the same labor rights as any other profession. Collective bargaining is a fundamental democratic right that ensures fair working conditions for faculty, who, like all workers, deserve dignity and respect. *Protecting the Future of Faculty* The number of faculty has not kept up with student enrollment. Collective bargaining would help create conditions that attract future educators, ensuring a sustainable faculty pipeline. It would protect our universities by making the teaching profession an appealing option for Maryland's rising generations, ensuring continued excellence in education and research at our public institutions. *Reducing Wasteful Spending* While faculty numbers have declined, administrative positions have increased. Collective bargaining for faculty would help reduce unnecessary administrative costs by making many redundant positions irrelevant. This would lead to savings that could be better spent on faculty salaries, enhancing the overall educational experience. It would also create a more efficient and effective educational environment. *Making Public Universities Attractive Places to Work* Many public higher education institutions across the country, as well as prestigious private institutions in Maryland, already recognize the importance of collective bargaining. It no longer makes sense to exclude four-year public institutions from this process. Our public universities are vital to society, not only for their educational services but also as employers. To attract the best faculty, we must make these institutions attractive workplaces. I ask for your support in granting faculty the right to organize and negotiate for fair and transparent working conditions. The change this bill represents is crucial for the future of Maryland's colleges and universities, and will benefit our state as a whole. Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

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