

**Written Testimony Submitted to the Maryland House Appropriations Committee
HB 661
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 Dia Sekayi and I am an Associate Professor at Morgan State University where I have worked for 9 years. I am also a member of the American Association of University Professors/American Federation of Teachers. I call on this committee to issue a favorable report to HB 661. 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.

I would like to share several examples of why faculty need the protection of collective bargaining.

1. My start date at Morgan was January of 2016. I came in as an Associate Professor without tenure. In 2017, I applied for tenure, this is the same year our new Tenure policy went into effect. This policy was to replace the 2004 policy. The 2017 policy included some improvements, one of which was the notification of faculty of their standing in January of the tenure and promotion cycle. In the 2004 policy, faculty would apply for tenure/promotion in September and be notified of a decision in May or June. For context, when a person is not granted tenure, they are issued a one-year terminal contract. In other words, they are fired. So, not having any idea of one's standing until a final decision is made at the end of the academic year disadvantages the faculty member who may wish to forgo the one-year contract once tenure is not granted.

The improved 2017 policy included notification of the votes from the department and school committees, the department chairperson, and the Dean of the school in January. Since my start date was prior to fall 2017, I was told that I was "grandfathered" into the previous policy. My understanding of grandfathering is that it protects employees and secures more advantageous benefits that are

changed to the disadvantage of the employee; it is not intended to lock employees in to antiquated rules. In any case, I discovered recently that the section of the 2017 policy that provided notification to vote to faculty in January had been rendered null and void that same year by General Counsel. So, even though the first page of the policy states that this 2017 policy supersedes all previous policies, and even though the notification of votes clause of the policy is still in the written document, I was told that the policy does not apply to me. I could ask my Dean for the notification, but I was not covered in the policy.

This 2017 policy was passed by the University Council, the body that the President refers to as our system of shared governance. This body is purposeless if its decisions can be overridden without consultation with the body who passed the policy and without notice of changes made to the policy.

2. As a full-time tenured faculty member my administrative role accounted for 50% of my time, my teaching 30%, research 25%, and service 10%. My planned workload authorized by the university was 115%. I ended that arrangement by stepping down from my administrative role. Others continue to be overloaded without compensation. Though I requested one, I was never given an appointment letter to codify the arrangement.
3. Working with doctoral students is a heavy lift that only those of us who do it understand. I and all my program colleagues have carried an unreasonable load of doctoral students for as long as I have been at the university, sometimes advising the dissertations of 20 or more students, where a reasonable load is 3-5 students. In addition to this planned overload, there are continuous requests for all of us to do more. I am an organized person, and I work nearly every day of the week to keep up with the workload expectation. Intellectual labor is often cast off as privileged as are those who do the work. Intellectual laborers are often subjected to abusive career-specific practices and need protection. We experience workload issues that are particular to academia. Being unreasonably overloaded is a concern and to be overloaded without appropriate compensation is an even greater concern.

The workload policy is unclear at best. Even when standards are set, they are not followed. For example, faculty are required to teach three courses per semester. Five dissertation students are said to equal one course. A faculty member with 15 dissertation students should teach no additional courses, but many, if not most, do and they do so uncompensated.

4. Effective July 1, 2024, faculty were included in the group of employees who were eligible to receive both COLA and merit pay. For faculty, these increases are typically effective on the first day of our contract; this year the first day was August 7th, but we were told that raises would be effective on August 21st instead. There was no explanation offered for why the effective date would not be the first day of the contract. I asked and was told that the state contract begins on August 21st, but Academic Affairs at Morgan chose August 7th as our start date instead. The first pay with the increase was to be on September 11th. On the 12th of September, we received a message saying that we would not be paid on the 11th. No date was listed for when we would be paid, just that it would be retroactive whenever it happened. We were eventually paid in October. As a note, the unionized staff received their pay raises on time.

These are examples of what Morgan faculty deal with ALL OF THE TIME! We need the protection of collective bargaining so that someone is held accountable for these kinds of events. For the record, I fully expect negative consequences for writing this testimony.

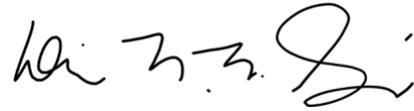
On behalf of faculty who fear retaliation and do not feel safe writing a testimony that includes their names, what follows is a compilation of many confidential conversations in which I have engaged.

1. Inequitable salaries, sometimes along gender lines, sometimes because of favoritism.
2. Tenure and promotion decisions that seem to favor non-Black faculty.
3. Tenure and promotion policies that are unclear.
4. Tenure and promotion processes that change at a moment's notice.
5. Substantial work that should warrant a course release or overload pay that is not compensated in either way.
6. No performance evaluations despite an established process with deadlines. As a result, there is a lack of clarity on how merit pay decisions are made.

Having a collective voice would be a safer way to address each of the aforementioned concerns. Members of the Committee, this state favors the right to bargain collectively for many other groups, including some with whom faculty work side-by-side. 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. I again therefore call for a favorable report to this Bill SB750.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dia Sekayi". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized initial "D" and "S".

Dia Sekayi, Ph.D.

Associate Professor

Morgan State University