

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

By Wei Liu, Post-doc researcher

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 Wei Liu and I am a post-doc at university of Maryland College park, where I have worked for 2 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 ed workers in Maryland.

I am a postdoctoral researcher in the field of biomedical engineering. My primary responsibilities include conducting scientific research, designing and performing experiments, analyzing data, and working on innovative solutions to real-world challenges in the United States. My research aims to advance medical technologies and improve healthcare outcomes. As a postdoc, I do not have formal teaching responsibilities, but I actively contribute to the academic community by mentoring graduate and undergraduate students in the lab, assisting with research training, and collaborating with faculty members on various projects. My work is not limited to a single research focus; I often take on additional projects that align with broader institutional and societal needs.

I support this bill not just to improve my own life, but more importantly, to support my friends and colleagues. Personally, I am satisfied with my current work and living conditions, but I have seen many postdocs from other countries struggle due to a lack of necessary support. They face immense research pressure while also bearing the high cost of living in the U.S. Over the past few years, the cost of living has continued to rise, making it increasingly difficult for researchers to sustain themselves. I hope this bill will help improve financial support for postdocs and faculty, including access to more affordable health insurance. Currently, I pay around \$300 per month for health insurance, which is a significant burden. More importantly, these costs should not fall entirely on our principal investigators (PIs), but right now, that is often the case. I know many young PIs who cannot afford these expenses and, as a result, hesitate to hire postdocs. This has become a widespread issue, limiting opportunities for both researchers and faculty.

Members of the Committee, This state 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. Improving working conditions and financial support for the entire research community is one of my primary reasons for advocating for this bill. By ensuring fair compensation, job security, and better benefits, we can create a more sustainable and productive research environment that ultimately benefits Maryland's scientific progress and economic prosperity. 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.

Sincerely,

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