

**Written Testimony Submitted to the
Maryland House Appropriations Committee
By Thomas G. Zeller, 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 Thomas Zeller and I am a professor at the University of Maryland, College Park, where I have worked for 22 years. I am a resident of Greenbelt, MD, where many of my neighbors work for UMD or have attended it. I call on this committee to issue a favorable report to this Bill. The state already grants this right towards nearly every other state employee, as well as the faculty at our community colleges and the non-academic workforce at our 4 year institutions. It is clear that this right should be extended to the rest of higher education in Maryland. Faculty need to be able to unionize in order to improve their working conditions. Instructors and students will benefit from these changes.

On the College Park campus, there are 3,392 professional-track faculty. They teach most of the credit hours on campus. However, their status is precarious. Contracts can be given or withdrawn at the last minute, and even instructors who have taught for more than a decade can be fired without a reason given. Their pay is often low. Regarding tenured and tenure-track faculty, their number has fallen by 6.9% between 2014 and 2022, while the number of non-tenure track faculty has risen by 19.3% during the same period. Given these inequities, it is important that collective bargaining will be allowed on our campus. It would improve working conditions for the most vulnerable instructional faculty on our campus and provide better instruction for our students.

Members of the committee, this state has for decades viewed collective bargaining between state employees and management as the best way to enroot democracy in our workplaces and public education institutions. The right to collective bargaining has been long recognized not only as a fundamental human right, but it has also in this state been seen 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 county, and indeed to many private, prestigious institutions in our own state. The reasons to exempt 4-year public institutions from this path just no longer make 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.