



Testimony - HB 661, State Personnel – Collective Bargaining – Faculty
Favorable
House Appropriations Committee
March 4, 2025
Terrence Cavanagh
On Behalf of SEIU Local 500

Honorable Chairman Barnes and Members of the House Appropriations Committee:

As a union of over 23,000 workers that represent faculty and staff at various universities and colleges throughout the DMV, we have seen first hand how collective bargaining rights change a workforce for the better. Over the past several years new bargaining units have developed at some of our most prestigious institutions of higher learning in the region. Many times the grievances around working conditions, internal processes, and shared governance are echoed from school to school. The issues we see in academic workforces are systemic in this nation. Too often, the idea of running colleges and universities like a business has resulted in attempting to squeeze faculty & staff for maximum efforts with minimal compensation. Dissent and dissatisfaction are met with hostility and hesitancy rather than self-reflection. Shared governance is decied as a sham process to rubber stamp unilateral decisions by administrations.

And, yet, once workers have unionized and negotiated contracts, morale improves. Co-governance of the institution is realized in a meaningful way that respects the value of every worker. Collective bargaining rights, union jobs with living wages, and making Maryland one of the best places to work in this nation has long been a priority of many of you for years. However, year after year, public sector workers in this state have had to come before this body piecemeal to be granted the right to collectively bargain. And, once again the faculty from our university system come before the Maryland General Assembly seeking to be treated as any other employee of our institutions of higher learning.

For too long, faculty members—including adjuncts, lecturers, and tenure-track professors—have played a crucial role in educating our students while lacking a real voice in negotiating the terms of their employment. This legislation provides a long-overdue opportunity for faculty to collectively advocate for fair wages, improved working conditions, and greater stability in their roles—factors that ultimately enhance the quality of education for Maryland’s students.

Faculty working conditions are student learning conditions. When educators have the stability, fair pay, and protections they deserve, they can focus on delivering high-quality instruction, conducting innovative research, and mentoring the next generation of Maryland’s workforce.

Our governor Wes Moore has often spoken that no Marylander should be left behind. Let this be the year the members of this committee and the general assembly make that a reality for faculty in the University System of Maryland. We ask you to be bold, to move democracy forward. We ask you to support HB 661 and provide a favorable report.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Terrence Cavanagh
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