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**Written Testimony Submitted to the
Maryland Senate Finance Committee
HB 661: State Personnel– Collective Bargaining – Faculty
March 3, 2025
Favorable**

Good afternoon Chair Barnes, Vice Chair Chang, and members of the House Appropriations Committee. AFT-Maryland is the certified bargaining representative for numerous public employee and public education workers in the state, including the full-time faculty at eight community colleges throughout Maryland. In order to make our colleges campuses more efficient and democratic, as well as to better position our state to fend off partisan attacks against important fields of study within higher education, we call on this committee to issue a favorable report to HB 661, the bill that would lift the state's restriction on allowing faculty at our four-year public institutions to decide if they would like to engage in collective bargaining with the administration at each of their institutions.

Members of the committee, Higher Education in this country is under attack, and Maryland has unfortunately relegated the academics doing the work of our public colleges and universities—the teachers, the researchers—to the sidelines in this fight. The threat of the federal government withholding dollars to any field of study that does not follow in lock-step to its politically partisan viewpoints is shaping our universities for the worse, with important programs like African American Studies, Women's Studies— both being fields where the work of faculty at our public 4-year institutions are world-renowned—, and key scientific fields in particular being targeted. Maryland higher education is in a weaker position to defend against these attacks than states that do allow their faculty to bargain collectively because Maryland relies on the handful of administrators to defend against these attacks, thrusting the voices of the faculty to the margins.

But the financial situation of our colleges and universities is in trouble not just because grants from the federal government are arbitrarily being withheld in some sort of anti-intellectualist crusade, but also because the gap between compensation for the educators and the administration is so large, it is inefficient and unsustainable. For example, the *Baltimore Sun's* annual database of state employee salaries does show in 2023 salaries for management and administrators far outpace the compensation for full-time faculty. By cutting off a path to

collective bargaining to faculty, Maryland has in effect given administrators a blank check to write their own salaries and compensation, while the rank-and-file faculty continue to see their compensation stagnate. If faculty are not even allowed to choose the ability to bargain collectively, the gap between faculty and administrative compensation will only continue to grow, draining more funds from the state, while those increased state dollars will once again not make their way to the classrooms and labs in the form of teaching and research faculty compensation.

Collective bargaining at our campuses is even more urgent this year with the state budget in crisis, as the state's bleak budgetary picture is going to hit our public colleges and universities particularly hard in the forms of layoffs and position eliminations. During budget hearings, the Chancellor's Office and presidents at local campuses have admitted to the Budget and Taxation and Appropriations Committees that faculty layoffs will be forthcoming. Faculty and staff on our campuses have not been informed of any of this, however, an example of how the administration's idea of "shared governance" without faculty bargaining is an empty shell.

We must ask— if administrators are planning faculty and staff layoffs and position eliminations in tight budget times, why do they never suggest a pay cut for themselves? Why are the first people cut out the rank-and-file educators who teach our students, and not admins that easily make mid to high six-figure salaries? How is this budget picture for our higher ed system helping our state? The clear answer is that it is not: that Maryland's system where faculty are cut out of real decisions in the governance of our institutions does real harm to higher education in this state. For these reasons, we call on the legislature to give faculty the tools to fight for higher education: give them the right to form a union if they so choose. Again, we call on a favorable report to HB 661.