

**Written Testimony Submitted to the
Maryland House Appropriations Committee
By Tom Goyens, 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,

The Salisbury University AAUP Chapter strongly supports this bill, which would grant collective bargaining rights to all faculty employed by the University System of Maryland.

The Core Issue: Workplace Democracy

At its heart, this is about ensuring democracy in the workplace. While SU faculty participate in a Faculty Senate that conducts elections, meets regularly, and delegates tasks to various committees, the Senate is merely an advisory body. Its recommendations can be ignored by the administration at will. Moreover, there is an implicit expectation that the Senate confines itself to narrow academic matters, avoiding internal administrative decisions, university finances, or relations with the USM Board. While faculty may occasionally be included in hiring committees or similar forums, the fundamental grievance remains: Faculty deserve the right to demand and rely on full transparency and accountability regarding all decisions by any administrative unit that directly affects them as employees and members of the campus community. Collective bargaining rights are essential to addressing this grievance.

Faculty Grievances

1. Lack of Workplace Protections

Faculty lack the ability to advocate for workplace protections afforded to unionized workers. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted this vulnerability. During the pandemic, faculty had minimal input on crucial decisions regarding vaccination policies, masking, or remote work accommodations--even for those with medical or childcare challenges. Faculty were expected to pivot rapidly to online teaching, requiring significant retraining without compensation or reduced duties in other areas.

In a more recent example, the university created staff holidays for the first two days of the 2025 Winter session without properly informing faculty, so winter faculty were forced to start their classes with the entire campus closed (including the library and bookstore) with only limited remote administrative support--another example of decisions being made without thinking about or consulting faculty.

2. Salary Compression and Fair Compensation

Faculty are powerless to address salary compression or secure fair pay commensurate with their experience. While the administration has made some positive strides in this area, the fundamental governance issue remains: decisions--whether favorable or not--are unilateral, with minimal faculty input.

3. Inconsistent Treatment of Non-Tenure Track Faculty

Full-time, non-tenure track faculty face inequitable working conditions compared to their tenure-track peers. Research on our campus has revealed: Inconsistent workload expectations across departments. Confusion regarding benefits and rights. A lack of a clear pathway to transition to tenure-track positions. Persistent feelings among non-tenure track faculty of being treated as "second-class citizens" despite holding equivalent degrees, training, and experience.

4. Exploitation of Part-Time and Contractual Faculty

Part-time faculty face tenuous employment conditions and significant pay disparities. Despite teaching the same courses as full-time faculty, they are paid less and rely on cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs) that are neither guaranteed nor contractually protected. While SU has granted COLA raises to adjuncts since 2019, these increases are dependent on administrative discretion and could be rescinded at any time. Furthermore, part-time faculty employment is tied to class enrollment, leaving them vulnerable to last-minute class cancellations that result in lost wages despite extensive preparation. No process exists to address these situations, leaving adjuncts uncompensated for their time and effort.

5. Faculty with Small Children

Testimony from a full-time faculty: "I believe if we had a union, we would be able to successfully bargain for either a daycare center on campus or daycare benefits/tuition waivers. Our institution, I have been told, is the only one in the system without on-site childcare. Faculty have been lobbying for this since before my first child, now 7, was born. The president's office said they would look into arranging to have a certain number of spaces reserved for faculty at local childcare centers but nothing has come of it. It is very hard to find reliable childcare in this area, especially for children under 2. Infant spots require you register more than a year in advance. This is an issue when trying to recruit new hires with small children. I will also say as someone who is often the sole caregiver during the week, having some kind of on-site childcare or after school care would help me more fully participate in the life of the university. The faculty senate meets in person after children are being picked up from school, so I can't attend those meetings."

Additional Impact: Enhancing Student Services

Granting faculty collective bargaining rights will not only improve working conditions but also benefit students. Faculty maintain close relationships with students over multiple semesters, putting them in a unique position to advocate for student wellbeing. Improved faculty conditions will enhance student experiences, academic achievement, and overall university metrics--satisfying students, parents, and the broader community while raising Salisbury University's standing among peer institutions.

Conclusion

The right to collective bargaining empowers faculty to secure transparency, accountability, and fairness in their workplace, ultimately strengthening the entire university community. It is a vital step toward ensuring that all faculty--regardless of rank or employment status--can advocate effectively for themselves, their students, and the future of Salisbury University.

Sincerely,

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