

**Written Testimony Submitted to the
Maryland House Appropriations Committee
By Desiree Rowe, Associate 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 Desiree Rowe and I am an associate professor at Towson University, where I have worked for 10 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. This right should be extended to all higher ed workers in Maryland.

As a professor of communication studies, I work closely with undergraduate and graduate students to develop their skills of advocacy for themselves and others. I teach public speaking, communication ethics, and qualitative research methods. Along with teaching over 100 students each semester, I advise 25-30 students, and serve on numerous service committees to help make TU a better place to learn and work.

Most importantly, I also served as the chair of Towson University Academic Senate from 2021-2023. Because of this position, I am uniquely situated to discuss the relationship between shared governance and collective bargaining. As Chair of the TU Academic Senate, I was always informed of ongoing decisions made by the TU administration. And, in some minor decisions (i.e. which faculty should serve on ad hoc committees) the TU Academic Senate had a deciding voice.

However, on nearly all the decisions on salary and faculty workload the Academic Senate was informed of the outcome and not part of the decision-making process. The administration will argue that shared governance is better than collective bargaining. It isn't. As senate chair it was clear to me that any voice or power I had within the conversation was granted to me by the administration and my presence in the room could be removed at any time. A representative from the TU Academic Senate was in the room to allow the administration to say they are taking shared governance into consideration, when in fact, it was all for show.

This performance of "working together with shared governance" allows executives from TU to stand before your committee and attempt to make the case that collective bargaining is no better than shared governance. That argument is a farce. Shared governance is performative faculty power, that can be easily taken away at the whims of any TU executive. The senate chair is pulled onto a myriad of committees and meetings to demonstrate this, but much like the paintings on the wall, the senate chair has no real voice to revise or oppose policies on salary or workload.

Please allow faculty to have a real voice about their workplace conditions. As TU Senate Chair, I saw first hand how important advocacy is for our faculty. We need a real, not performative, voice in the room to advocate for better workload conditions for our graduate students and faculty.

Please vote in favor of collective bargaining rights for faculty.

Sincerely,

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