

My name is Dionne Woolford-Hudgins and I serve as a full-time Professor of Nursing and Program Coordinator for the Associate Degree Nursing Program at Baltimore City Community College, where I have worked for over 12 years. I am requesting that this committee issue a favorable report on this Bill. Currently, the state grants the right of collective bargaining to a large number of other state employees, as well as the faculty at other Maryland community colleges, and the non-academic workforce at Maryland's four-year institutions of higher education. Clearly, this right should be extended to all institutions of higher education within the state of Maryland.

In the midst of a nursing shortage that is projected to continually grow, the hard to hire nursing faculty salary has been removed, making it difficult to recruit and retain full-time nursing faculty. Nursing faculty have to fight to be compensated for scholarships and rewards earned and sent to the college for disbursement by organizations like the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC). The conditions in the Nursing Building are less than optimal. The building temperatures are often extreme, rats and mice run freely inside the building, plumbing issues go unresolved for inexcusable lengths of times, elevator intentionally placed out of service for over two months causing students, faculty, and staff with health issues to climb 40 stairs up and 40 stairs down multiple times throughout the day. Outside professional development opportunities were not covered by the college until after an accreditation visit occurred and noted that there was no professional development necessary to keep faculty abreast of best-practices in education.

I support this bill because there needs to be transparency, accountability, and true checks and balances. Collective bargaining will help to ensure genuine shared governance initiatives and implementation of a process in which faculty and administrators work together cordially for the common good of those who we are called to serve. It is critical for faculty who bring their knowledge, skills, and expertise to institutions of higher education to be at the table and have a voice in decisions that are made. Collective bargaining will help to ensure fair compensation for those most involved with our largest stakeholders (students). Not only will collective bargaining support current faculty, but those who join institutions of higher education in the future. Supporting this bill is a way to pay it forward for many years to come.

Members of the Committee, This state has for decades viewed collective bargaining between state employees and management as the best way to promote democracy in our workplaces and public institutions. The right to collective bargaining has long been recognized as not only a fundamental human right, but also 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 nation, and indeed to many private, prestigious institutions in our own state. The reasons to exempt four-year public higher ed institutions from this path make no sense. I again therefore call for a favorable report to this Bill, as faculty in higher education support the upward social and economic mobility of individuals, families, and communities at large.