

My name is Susan Bernadzikowski. I chair the Department of English and Humanities at Cecil College where I have worked for 22 years. I call on this committee to issue a favorable report on this Bill.

My own institution does not yet have collective bargaining. While there are many positive aspects about my institution and its administration, issues persist with shared governance, transparency, and, in some cases, significantly varying treatment of individuals and departments. More administrative layers have been added even as enrollment has dropped. Increasingly, we are being required to teach on our own campus as well as in the high schools although we are not trained in secondary ed. Across higher ed, not just at my institution, many feel implicit pressure to lower standards, inflate grades, and pass students who have not demonstrated passing skills or students who have not done their own work. Regardless of what support exists from our administration, many want the unity of a group to fend off inappropriate encroachment on our curricula from actors outside of the institution. We do not have tenure, and how secure people feel in their jobs varies widely.

Faculty are asked to work hard on policies, procedures, and courses, but all too often, our recommendations are ignored or overturned. I have served on the Academic Senate for many years, but it is largely a place to report information and make recommendations that carry no real weight. We need to have a guaranteed seat at the table when decisions that affect our work lives and our students' learning are made.

Trying to solve problems one person at a time is inefficient, ineffective, and easy to dismiss. We need to be able to unite in the common interests of the faculty and of the integrity of higher ed. The problems that we wrestle with at our small institution are only amplified at larger institutions where the distance between the top and the faculty is even greater. All higher ed institutions deserve and need the protection of collective bargaining. 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. It is clear that this right should be extended to all higher ed workers in Maryland.