

**Written Testimony Submitted to the
Maryland Senate Finance Committee
By Jennifer Keohane, Associate Professor
SB0750
State Personnel - Collective Bargaining - Faculty
February 20, 2025
FAVORABLE**

Good afternoon Chair Beidle, Vice Chair Hayes, and members of the Senate Finance Committee.

My name is Jennifer Keohane, and I am an associate professor at the University of Baltimore, where I have worked for seven years. I call on this committee to issue a favorable report to this Bill. The state already grants this right to nearly every other state employee, as well as the faculty at our community colleges and the non-academic workforce at our 4 year institutions. It is clear that this right should be extended to the rest of higher education in Maryland.

In my role at the University of Baltimore, I teach three classes every semester, and I'm directly responsible for 60-80 students. In addition to teaching my own classes, I direct our program in Oral Communication and the undergraduate program in Digital Communication. This requires me to interface with the General Education Committee, as the Oral Communication courses are Graduation Requirements. In addition to working on learning outcomes and assessment, I staff the oral communication classes by hiring adjuncts to teach at our campus in Baltimore, in our Second Chance Program in Jessup Correctional Institute, and in our Dual Enrollment courses. Finding new adjuncts is a task made exceptionally difficult by the low rate of pay for part-time faculty. In addition to interviewing and hiring new faculty, I also conduct teaching observations to ensure quality courses are being delivered for our students. I serve in many additional roles on campus, such as chairing our undergraduate curriculum committee. Moreover, I pursue an active research program that results in peer-reviewed publications and conference presentations.

I strongly support the passage of this Bill for three reasons.

1. Collective bargaining is a key part of the democratic process in the workplace. Moreover, the fact that other state employees can collectively bargain, while higher ed faculty and graduate students have been excluded is undemocratic on face.
2. Collective bargaining streamlines and strengthens relations between administrators and faculty and graduate students. It ensures an efficient process for pursuing accountability when needed. When I was a graduate student in Wisconsin, a state that then allowed collective bargaining, union officials for our graduate student union (including me) met monthly with administrators to enforce our collective bargaining agreement, meetings that were quick, friendly, and had very real impacts on the quality of life of graduate students. We were able to work with our administrators to track down lost paychecks, ensure healthy and safe environments for graduate student employees, and pursue pay equity among departments.
3. Collective bargaining can improve the working conditions of our lecturers and part-time faculty. As it is, I struggle to hire part-time faculty to staff our oral communication courses because of the low pay and lack of institutional support. Not only that, I want our valuable part-time faculty to feel comfortable speaking their minds, teaching controversial subjects, and pursuing excellence in their roles. Since they teach so many credit hours, it is important to emphasize that their working conditions are our students' learning

conditions. If they had a collective bargaining agreement that facilitated improved working conditions, our departments and university classrooms would reap the benefits.

To conclude, I strongly urge a favorable report to this Bill. This state and many others have for decades viewed collective bargaining between state employees and management as an integral way to foster democracy in the workplace and at institutions of higher learning. Collective bargaining is a fundamental human right that safeguards the employee voice in places of work. Many other public, higher education institutions across the country protect this right for their employees, as do many prestigious, private institutions in our state. I must emphasize that our working conditions are our students' learning conditions. Given that we want Maryland to be a vibrant, educated state ready to meet the demands of the future, I again call for a favorable report to this Bill.

Sincerely,

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