

**Written Testimony Submitted to the
Maryland Senate Finance Committee
By Marcus Johnson, Assistant 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 Marcus Johnson and I am an Assistant Professor at UMD College Park, where I have worked for 3 years. I call on this committee to issue a favorable report to this bill. The state already grants this right towards 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.

I am a third-year assistant professor (tenure track) at UMD College Park. I am a young, Black man. I am one of the "lucky ones" because tenure-track positions have become much harder to attain over the last few decades. When I finished my PhD studies in 2017, I received the President's Postdoctoral Fellowship at U Maryland. Along with 3 Black women fellows, we were the inaugural cohort in a program that promised to help advance the careers of young scholars in that very uncertain space between graduate school and the tenure track. Unfortunately, when we got to UMD to do our postdocs, we learned that each of our home departments had unequal knowledge about how to transition postdoctoral fellows into tenure track positions. We would also later learn that our academic departments had unequal interest in helping us to make the transition. This despite the fact that the UMD Presidential Postdoctoral Fellowship Program is modeled after similar programs in the University of California system that provide a direct path from postdoc to the tenure track. Ultimately, my path to landing a tenure track position at UMD came from the institutional influence and the extra efforts of my postdoctoral mentor. And if we contrast this to the experience of the other fellows in my cohort (all women of color), none of whom are at UMD today, we can start to see how gender and racial disparities get created when academic workers (such as postdoctoral fellows) are excluded from decision making processes that are critical to career advancement.

If you extrapolate from my experience, we can see how UMD would end up with 1,339 tenured and tenure-track faculty and more than 3,392 full-time PTK faculty-- the latter are paid significantly less, with a significantly higher teaching load, and much less job security. From 2014 to 2022, the number of tenure-track faculty fell 6.9%, while the number of non-tenure track faculty rose to 19.3%. UMD also has the second lowest level of gender salary disparity among its peer institutions. Because workers are not allowed to collectively bargain together, we miss the mark of achieving equitable outcomes in employment, faculty diversity, and compensation--all values that are embraced by this legislative body and our higher education institutions in the USM.

Members of the committee, this state has for decades viewed collective bargaining between state employees and management as the best way to enroot democracy in our workplaces and public education institutions. The right to collective bargaining has been long recognized not only as a fundamental human right, but it has also in this state been seen 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 county, and indeed to many private, prestigious institutions in our own state. The reasons to exempt 4-year public institutions from this path just no longer make sense. I

again therefore 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.