

**Written Testimony Submitted to the
Maryland Senate Finance Committee
SB 750
State Personnel – Collective Bargaining – Faculty**

February 20, 2024

FAVORABLE

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

My name is John Hudgins, and I am a tenured associate professor and program codirector at Coppin State University, where I have worked for 31 years. It is my hope that this committee will issue a favorable report on SB0750. Unlike our neighbors to the south, Maryland recognizes the value of collective bargaining and unions for its workers. This right is currently extended to nearly every state employee except faculty at 4-year institutions. Collective bargaining is a right for faculty at the community colleges as well as the non-faculty workforce at four-year institutions. My plea to you is that you contribute to the process of extending this right to all workers in higher education in the state of Maryland.

The right to collective bargaining will empower faculty by creating more participation in the decision making that affects the working/learning environments of the respective universities. Currently shared governance is a charade, pretty much in name and image only. The faculty voice in major decisions on campus is essentially ignored and seldom acknowledged.

Since the year 2000, Coppin State University (CSU) has had seven (7) presidents, four “permanent” and three interim presidents. Each has had his/her own approach to shared governance. Shared governance at Coppin and other University System Maryland (USM) campuses is very much a matter of presidential fiat. While USM BOR policy speaks in a relatively positive tone about shared governance, presidents have not felt bound to put in place or allow effective shared governance structures or processes.

CSU’s current shared governance “President’s Committee” of approximately 30 positions includes five (5) faculty members and two (2) students. The other 23 members are part of the administrative team including twelve (12) deans and vice presidents who directly or indirectly report to the president. They are “at-will” appointees which means they serve at the president’s “pleasure.” The current president avoids appointing senior faculty members to this and other committees preferring junior, untenured and faculty relatively new to the campus. Without tenure and campus history they represent the most vulnerable of faculty. Tenure track status on this campus essentially means “at will” until tenure is secured.

Collective bargaining is not expected to yield faculty rule of the campus as some imply. The USM appointed president is and perhaps should remain the final authority on the campus. Rather collective bargaining can force a more deliberative and open decision-making process. Like the stated aim of shared governance collective bargaining would require the president and his/her administrative team to seriously and openly discuss potential policy and practice options with the faculty. Collective bargaining would improve accountability by requiring the administration to explain and defend actions proposed on behalf of the university, especially when those actions are contrary to the stated will of the faculty.

Every university has on its faculty some of the most gifted, talented and learned professionals available. That is the essential definition of faculty. This veritable “think tank” should not be consistently and intentionally ignored in the decision-making process. University students are trained by this faculty to graduate and have a major impact in the world by impacting the effectiveness of major organizations and corporations. Yet this does not include campus affairs. Faculty knowledge is frequently regarded as worthless to the decision-making processes and directions of that same university. For example, the input of external marketing consultants with only bachelor’s degrees is deemed more relevant and valuable than the insight and wisdom of those with Ph.Ds. who teach and research marketing every day. There is a contradiction in this picture.

A perusal of the collective bargaining agreement at Delaware State University, a sister Historically Black College or University (HBCU) demonstrates a clarity and certainty in the functioning of the university lacking at Coppin State University, also an HBCU. HBCUs have long been regarded as presidential universities. Faculty are to be seen and not heard. Some major issues unresolved or not fully deliberated at CSU are:

1) The Academic year – For at least ten years the faculty has sought to reduce the academic year from a rare ten months to the more common nine months. After discussion the administration takes the concern “under advisement” with no serious justification for rejecting the proposal or the continuation of the existing practice. The tenth month actually consists of two weeks of mandatory annual leave (Through the middle of June) long after students have departed, classes ending mid-May.

2) Teaching load – The administration(s)/USM simply refuses to consider anything other than 24 credit hours per academic year. This is considered traditional for small universities and HBCUs without any discussion of a rationale. Changes in the student body and changes in the advising, service and research expectations of faculty overtime seem not worthy of discussion.

3) Discussions of class size are not deliberative. The administration retains the power to change class size and to add courses at will, as administrative prerogative. Given class size variations across universities, there should be merit in collectively determining what should work best in a given context. Should a given class be limited to 100 students, 40 students, 30 students, 10 or 15 students? It would seem that those conducting the class would have a valuable insight.

4) What should academic service, advising, community service look like?

5) Who should be involved in defining office hours, vacation, other leave, and various employment practices?

6) Can the Appointment, Rank, Tenure and Promotion (ART) process be simpler and much more straight forward? CSU is currently operating under an ART document approved in 2010. The faculty approved and put forth a revised document in 2021. It is still under consideration by the administration. It was recently resubmitted requesting a definitive response/reaction.

7) Recent discussions of pay equity, faculty grievance process, and a response to campus bullying have all been taken under advisement by the administration. Despite lengthy proposals, studies and other input, an open deliberative process of decision making is avoided.

Members of the committee, collective bargaining offers the promise that campus decision making can become more rapid, definitive, inclusive and transparent. Shared governance is not working and is all but non-existent at many USM campuses. For years Maryland has upheld collective bargaining between state employees and management as the best way to promote democracy in the workplaces and public institutions. The right to collective bargaining has long been recognized across the nation as the best way of ensuring that employee (faculty) voices play a vital role in constructing conditions that govern teaching/learning workplaces. In the end faculty, students, the state and the nation benefit. Our institutions of higher education become more vibrant, flexible and adaptable to an ever changing world.

I urge your favorable consideration of this bill.

Respectfully Submitted,

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