

**Written Testimony Submitted to the
Maryland Senate Finance Committee**

By Anny Gaul, Assistant Professor

SB0750

State Personnel - Collective Bargaining - Faculty

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FAVORABLE

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

My name is Anny Gaul and I am an Assistant Professor at the University of Maryland, College Park, where I have worked since 2020. I call on this committee to issue a favorable report to this Bill. 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.

I teach classes in advanced Arabic language as well as in the history, politics, and culture of the Arab world. On top of this I regularly publish new research on the Arab world in scholarly journals and engage in public outreach activities; and as a tenure-track faculty member each year I spend in the job, I carry an additional level of responsibility for running the academic programs that I am a part of and serve on faculty committees responsible for the day-to-day running of those programs as a part of my job responsibilities.

In my years at the university it has become increasingly clear to me that faculty have little to no power when it comes to making financial and budgetary decisions about the programs we are tasked with running, even as our administrative burdens increase. This connects to a number of challenges that could be addressed through a collective bargaining process, including:

1. Pay equity: As it stands faculty have little to no power to enact policies that address gender and racial equity issues related to pay, whether at the department level or at higher levels of the administration. I have seen this first hand as a member of my department's Salary & Merit Committee; although our faculty have democratically created and voted to approve a merit policy that takes pay equity into account regarding the money we were supposed to allocate at the department level, our ability to actually implement it according to that policy is subject to the permission of administrators rather than our own democratic governance.

2. Administrative burdens that detract from teaching & research: The number of full-time faculty at UMD has not increased in accordance with increased enrollment since 2016. This means that faculty like myself are increasingly burdened with administrative tasks that take time away from our teaching and research. Meanwhile the number of UMD administrators at the management level has increased significantly -- up 42.4% from 2015 to 2019 and an additional 8.4% from 2020 to 2022, even as office and administrative support staff numbers have declined in the same period. In effect this means that less and less money from the state budget is actually making it to classrooms and to new research. Collective bargaining would empower us with mechanisms to counter this trend.

3. Bargaining rights would not only improve my working conditions but strengthen my program as a whole, which relies on the labor of a team of absolutely outstanding language instructors working under precarious conditions with no mechanism for advocating on their own behalf regarding working conditions, let alone improving those conditions. Improving their job security and working conditions translates into a better education for Maryland students. Our language instructors actively recruit Maryland high school and community college students into our program, creating clear pathways for educational advancement for a diverse population of Maryland students. If we cannot provide them the means to bargain for competitive contracted working conditions, we risk losing these opportunities.

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 that benefits everyone by extending equity and democratic practices, which should be the priority of any system of public education. 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. Universities where faculty have collective bargaining rights, including many of the country's prestigious public research universities, are places where professors are empowered to bargain a contract that reflects the issues that matter most to them--which should be a given at a public institution in a democratic society. The reasons to exempt 4-year public institutions from this fundamental right 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.