

Testimony from Riley Lankes

My name is Riley Lankes, I'm a graduate worker and PhD student in UMD's College of Information.

Graduate workers at UMD need a union, plain and simple. I could choose from any number of reasons why. The extra hours many of us grad workers put in outside of what we're paid for are one reason – this is the work keeps classes and research at this university running, yet so much of it goes uncompensated. The “guaranteed funding” which makes up the shoestring budget I live on, poised to evaporate at any time in the face of federal cuts, is another reason. Critical as these are, these are not the primary reason I wrote this testimony.

I'm wrote this because many of my peers are afraid to do so themselves. They fear having their visas canceled, their funding cut, their lives upended for the crime of speaking up. This climate of fear is un-American, and it disgusts me. It is the right of the people to speak freely, to peaceably to assemble, and to petition for a redress of grievances. The fact that so many are afraid to exercise these rights is exactly why we need a union. A legally enforceable contract gives protections we desperately need right now.

United we stand. Stand with us. Pass MD SB84.