

Testimony in Favor of SB0084

Good afternoon Chair, Vice Chair, and members of the committee.

My name is Mofi Solarin, and I am an undergraduate student at the University of Maryland - College Park and I'm testifying independently in support of SB0084.

Although I am not a graduate student, I see the impact graduate students make every day on my campus. They are our teaching assistants, discussion leaders, lab instructors, mentors, and researchers. Their dedication and passion often goes underappreciated which brings me and a lot of other undergraduate students great sadness. They are often the people undergraduates interact with most closely, I have completed entire courses where I never laid eyes on the professor ever but the graduate assistants were there day in day out and they play a major role in our learning, academic success, and sense of belonging at our institutions. I've had graduate students go out of their way to create study guides for students, host multi-day study sessions and office hours to guarantee our success as undergraduate students. Most times it feels like they care more about us than actual professors yet universities constantly overlook these passionate, young and bright minds. It almost feels like they're being punished for wanting to pursue higher education which should not be the case especially in a world where intellectuals are essentially a dying breed.

Graduate students carry significant responsibility while balancing heavy workloads, research expectations, and teaching duties often with limited financial support and little institutional protection. When graduate students are overworked or under-supported, it does not only affect them; it affects the quality of undergraduate education, the pace of research, and the overall health of the campus community.

As an undergraduate, I benefit directly from the labor and dedication of graduate students. They answer questions outside of class, provide mentorship, write letters of recommendation, and help guide students who are navigating college for the first time or even students like myself interested in graduate programs. Many of them are doing this while struggling to afford housing, healthcare, or basic necessities. That is not sustainable, and it is not fair. No member of my Terp family should have to deal with this, and no Maryland-er at large should either.

By improving conditions for graduate students or at least giving them the collective bargaining rights to do so, this bill helps ensure stable teaching, stronger research, and better outcomes for undergraduates like me and campus communities at large.

Supporting graduate students is an investment in educational quality and institutional excellence across Maryland. I urge the committee to issue a favorable report on SB0084.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Go Terps!