

My name is Dr. Danielle Buglak, and I am a postdoctoral fellow at the National Institutes of Health, as well as an organizer and Political Events Lead for the Citizenship and Legislative (CAP) committee for our fellows union, UAW 2750. I am writing to strongly support passage of SB084, which would enable graduate students at the University of Maryland to form a union.

As a graduate student at the University of North Carolina, I was not part of a labor union. While I was fortunate to have a positive graduate research experience, many of my friends and colleagues did not, dealing with harassment, overwork, and exploitation, often with little recourse. Despite producing cutting edge research, teaching courses, and obtaining grant funding for the university, we had no bargaining power to negotiate our stipends, benefits, or working conditions. For me, this meant increasing deductibles and limited treatment options with my insurance at a time when my health was worsening due to chronic illness.

As a postdoctoral researcher at the NIH, I have seen firsthand the benefits of unionized research. Since forming our union, I now have greater protections and resources as a disabled fellow, enabling me to be healthier, happier, and more productive. Our union provides fellows with a voice and seat at the table in decisions that impact our working environments. Our union has also been at the forefront in protecting scientific research in the face of ongoing cuts by the Trump administration, including our Kill the Cuts rallies, lobbying to protect funding for scientific researchers, and our Shutdown Relief Fund, which provided \$500 a week to members who were not receiving paychecks during the 43 day government shutdown this past fall. Without our union, many of these efforts would not have been possible.

Collective bargaining for graduate students will improve their workplace conditions. Happier and healthier workers are more productive workers. Graduate unions at other universities, including the University of Michigan and University of California system, have proven that research and productivity do not collapse as a result of unionization.

I have benefited so much from our union, and graduated students at the University of Maryland deserve the same rights. I strongly urge you to support this legislation to give graduate students at the University of Maryland the right to unionize.