

**Written Testimony Submitted to the
Maryland Senate Finance Committee
SB0006**

State Personnel - Collective Bargaining - Nontenure Track Faculty

February 05, 2026

FAVORABLE

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

My name is Taimoor Shahid, and I am a full-time non-tenure-track postdoctoral researcher in the School of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures at the University of Maryland, College Park, where I have worked since 2023. I am part of a large group of highly trained scholars who contribute substantially to the university's research mission while remaining in some of the most precarious employment conditions in the institution. I am working with my colleagues in United Academics of Maryland (UAM), an affiliate of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), to secure collective bargaining rights for faculty in Maryland's public four-year institutions. Despite the central role postdoctoral researchers and other non-tenure-track faculty play in sustaining the university's intellectual output and reputation, I am one of very few Maryland public employees without the right to collectively bargain, leaving me with little formal protection or voice in decisions that directly shape my livelihood and career.

In my role as a postdoctoral researcher, I conduct independent and collaborative research in cutting-edge fields such as Digital Humanities, working at the intersection of history, literature, and computer science to generate new insights into how we understand the past and how that understanding can help shape our present and future. I contribute to grant writing and scholarly publications that enhance the university's research profile, and I actively participate in the intellectual life of the university through research platforms and public-facing initiatives, including offering free online classes to a broader community. My work supports the research infrastructure of my department and contributes to the training and mentorship of graduate and undergraduate students through informal teaching, collaboration, and scholarly engagement. Like many postdoctoral researchers, I also perform significant professional service that is often invisible and uncompensated, including peer review, and community-facing research activities. Although postdoctoral researchers are essential to the university's research productivity and student success, our labor is often treated as temporary or peripheral rather than as a core part of the academic workforce.

While all faculty deserve collective bargaining rights, non-tenure-track faculty are among the most vulnerable. As a postdoctoral researcher on external funding, my employment is directly tied to unstable funding streams, a situation made even more precarious by recent and ongoing federal research funding cuts. Many researchers like me must rely entirely on external grants to secure and maintain our positions, and even when we are successful in obtaining funding, a significant portion is absorbed by institutional overhead, further limiting the resources available to support our work. This creates a persistent state of job insecurity, where long-term planning--financial, professional, or personal--is extremely difficult. Because my position lacks long-term security, I was unable to participate in the state's public retirement system and instead had to rely on privately managed retirement options, shifting the burden of long-term financial risk entirely onto me. This not only creates additional stress and uncertainty, but also effectively denies non-secure academic workers access to the protections and stability of publicly managed retirement funds. At the same time, postdoctoral salaries remain low relative to the high cost of living in this region, and we often lack basic structural support such as dedicated office spaces because of broader institutional constraints on how non-tenure-track positions are resourced. These

conditions send a clear message that postdoctoral researchers are essential to the university's mission, yet remain structurally expendable.

In addition to material insecurity, non-tenure-track faculty also lack meaningful access to shared governance and institutional decision-making. We have little to no formal voice in policies that shape our working conditions, evaluation procedures, or professional development opportunities. While shared governance exists in principle, it is largely advisory and often excludes non-tenure-track faculty altogether. This lack of representation is especially damaging because some internal university grants, research funds, and professional development resources are restricted to tenure-track faculty, further entrenching inequality and limiting opportunities for postdoctoral researchers / non-tenure track faculty to grow, contribute, and transition into stable academic careers. Despite these barriers, postdoctoral researchers / non-tenure track faculty remain deeply committed to the mission of the university and to the students and communities we serve. It is through the right to collectively bargain--a right afforded to almost all other Maryland public employees and many peer institutions--that non-tenure-track faculty, and hopefully soon all faculty, will finally have the voice, stability, and dignity necessary to fully support the intellectual and public mission of the University of Maryland and the state of Maryland.

Sincerely,

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This testimony has been submitted on behalf of this individual by the United Academics of Maryland (UAM).