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BILL: SB 84 - State Personnel - Collective Bargaining - Graduate Assistants
COMMITTEE: Finance
DATE: January 29, 2026
POSITION: FAVORABLE

The University System of Maryland Student Councils(USMSC) represents over 170,000 undergraduate and graduate students across the University System of Maryland's 12 institutions and 3 regional higher education centers. As such, we are in full support of Senate Bill 84.

Graduate assistants are important members of our academic communities. They facilitate and support the teaching of their peers, drive groundbreaking research, and contribute to the overall success of our institutions. Despite their essential roles, many face significant challenges, including inadequate pay, insufficient benefits, and limited avenues to address workplace concerns.

It is important to note that graduate students are both students **and** workers. Graduate students do not contest the educational benefits of their work. However, teaching classes, engaging in funded research, grading, and providing instructional labor are all essential functions of a university.

Receiving tuition remission does not negate worker status; rather, they are the unique compensation structures that the higher education system provides. The recognition of graduate students as workers in the context of collective bargaining does not erase their student identity but recognizes the reality of their employment.

Furthermore, collective bargaining advances principles of shared governance by formalizing participation, accountability, and follow-through in areas where it traditionally had limited reach and effectiveness.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge a favorable report from the committee.

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