

**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 Claire Dunning. I am a tenured professor of Public Policy at University of Maryland, College Park. I am working with my colleagues in United Academics of Maryland-University 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. As an Associate Professor who has worked at UMD and lived in the local College Park area since 2018 in the School of Public Policy, I am one of only very few Maryland public employees without these rights.

While all faculty deserve collective bargaining rights, non-tenure-track faculty are among the most vulnerable. My non-tenure track colleagues at the School of Public Policy are essential to pursuing our college's and university's goals of educating students and pursuing research that will improve the world. In particular, these colleagues are at the forefront of helping the state of Maryland meet its climate goals through research on climate policy locally and around the globe; others work on nuclear security, defense strategy, and child advocacy. In the classroom, my non-tenure track colleagues bring practitioner insights to ensure academic experiences accurately prepare our students for the policy world they hope to join, and mentor students in an increasingly difficult job market. Despite these contributions, non-tenure track faculty face vulnerabilities and precarities that undermine their research, teaching, and service to the university. When their classes get cut, their class sizes grow, administrative responsibilities increase, and exclusion from decision-making spaces the pain is felt most acutely by them but is shared by us all. I have had countless conversations with students upset about classes getting canceled or expanded. This drain on my time is not the fault of students or my colleagues, but a system that denies faculty, particularly non-tenure track faculty, the ability to strengthen and improve their working conditions through collective bargaining.

When I was granted tenure in 2023, it was a bittersweet moment: something I had worked for years to achieve by publishing an award-winning book, developing interdisciplinary partnerships across the university, supporting students through remote learning, developing new courses on pluralism and social change, publishing op-eds and other materials to translate academic research into practice, and launching a new research program on the history of philanthropy and policy. At the same time, I earned tenure at a moment when those who gain such status are fewer in number and attacks on higher education across the country mean that the protections of tenure are no longer sufficient. It is clear that higher education is under attack and the clearest way to defend this institution we all know to be essential to our economy and society is through collective action. I am a historian who studies change, social movements, and policy and the evidence is clear: collective action in general, and the rights of collective bargaining, is the surest way to protect and grow what we value. This means that tenured, tenure-track, and non-tenure track faculty need the rights of collective bargaining.

I love my job: every day students inspire me with their passion to make policy that improves our world, my research agenda allows me to explore big questions that fascinate me and are

important to our world, and my colleagues bring energy, creativity, and wisdom toward running our school. But my ability to do that job for which I was hired is being eroded by administrative decisions that exclude faculty voices and tell us to do more with less. It is through the right to collectively bargain--a right afforded almost all other Maryland Public Employees and USM peer institutions--that non-tenure-track faculty, and, hopefully soon, all faculty, will have the voice they deserve.

Sincerely,

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