

**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 Rianna Walcott and I am a tenure track Assistant Professor of Communication at the University of Maryland where I have worked for 2.5 years. 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. The state already grants the right of collective bargaining towards nearly every other state employee, as well as the faculty at our community colleges and the non-academic workforce at our four-year institutions. Prior to moving to the US education system for my postdoc just over three years ago I was a PhD candidate in the UK, where collective bargaining amongst university faculty - and separately, among students - is a given, through the UK-wide University and College Union (UCU) and the National Union of Students (NUS) respectively. It is clear that this right, that is so commonplace in other higher education systems, should be extended to all higher ed workers in Maryland.

While all faculty deserve collective bargaining rights, non-tenure-track faculty are among the most vulnerable. My PTK colleagues consistently maintain high teaching workloads, under less favourable conditions. They do not enjoy equal access to shared governance at departmental, college or university levels; lack security in their employment contracts (for example, I was horrified to learn of the annual automated 'scary letter' my instructional PTK colleagues receive, that informs all contingent staff of the upcoming end of their contract even when they have already been guaranteed a renewed contract term). In spite of these vulnerabilities my PTK colleagues remain an integral and dedicated force within the department, consistently meeting our core teaching demands and receiving incredible feedback from our student body while doing so.

I am an Assistant Professor, and prior to this appointment I held a two-year postdoctoral fellowship within the same department. I am now contracted to teach 2 classes per semester, usually with between 15-30 students. I also have some course buyouts at this time from a grant, so this year I have been on a 1-1 while I co-direct a lab that is committed to providing extensive programming; mentoring and leading a team of 3 graduate and 2 undergraduate students; and leading inter-institutional collaborative research outputs. I feel fortunate, if overworked, in my job, and bewildered by the clear inequities I see between the resources, workload, and security afforded to tenure track versus professional track faculty.

As a tenure track member of faculty, I also note that at the present moment I feel particularly vulnerable in exercising my 'freedom of academic speech' as a member of faculty on an immigrant visa, and collective bargaining feels all the more critical to collectively and safely challenge attacks on higher education and research standards. For precarious or contingent staff, inclusive of our graduate students, professional track faculty and librarians, collective bargaining allows for us to seek equitable conditions in our employ on issues such as job security, workload policies, and service expectations. Shared governance is no substitute for collective bargaining - the former does not guarantee representation in matters that impact university faculty, whereas the latter more fairly supports an

independent, collective voice.

Members of the Committee, this state has long recognized collective bargaining as essential for workplace democracy. This fundamental right ensures employee voices shape their working conditions; is already granted to many private institutions in our state; and to comparable higher education institutions nationally and internationally.

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).