

**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 Luka Arsenjuk. I am a tenured professor of Cinema and Media Studies at University of Maryland, College Park. I am a member of the 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), and I am working with my colleagues to secure collective bargaining rights for faculty in Maryland's public four-year institutions. As a faculty member in the School of Literatures, Languages, and Cultures, I am one of the only very few Maryland public employees without these rights.

I am also a resident of Maryland and currently live in Baltimore.

Over the past fifteen years of working at UMD, College Park, I have taught on average four courses per year, performed extensive service for my department, college, and the university, and engaged in student advising and internationally recognized research and publication activity. Over this same period, I have seen the working conditions of faculty, graduate student workers, and staff deteriorate due to increasing administrative bloat and mismanagement of the university's resources.

The group of university faculty that has been most negatively affected by this deterioration of our working conditions is the non-tenure-track faculty. Non-tenure-track faculty members are among the most vulnerable workers in the university, while they're also among the most essential. It is impossible to imagine a contemporary university, let alone a large public university system like Maryland's, function without the labor provided by the non-tenure-track faculty. I can see this plainly and directly in my own academic program (Cinema and Media Studies), in which non-tenure-track faculty assume most of the roles performed by tenure-track faculty, such as teaching, research and publishing, advising and other administrative tasks, without comparable compensation or equal ability to participate in the administrative decisions that determine the conditions of their own labor. When I served as the director of the program in which I teach, I worked closely with a group of non-tenure-track faculty in the day-to-day running of the program, and it became absolutely clear that the program would collapse without the dedicated service of my colleagues, just as it also became obvious to me that many of these colleagues, especially those in adjunct instructor roles, found themselves in extremely precarious positions, struggling to make ends meet, and often working a brutal teaching schedule across several campuses. I don't know if the injustice and the brutality of the system can be illustrated better than by pointing out the fact that the wage of an adjunct instructor in the humanities is so low that this instructor would have to teach twenty (20) courses in a year to make the equivalent salary of a tenured faculty member with the rank of an associate professor. And lest you think this is an abstract example, it is actually not. It is an example of a specific non-tenure-track colleague of mine, who described this situation, which they had no choice but to maintain due to the needs of their family, as a logistical nightmare that cannot but push one into a state of complete exhaustion.

Having had many conversations with my non-tenure-track faculty colleagues over the years, it's obvious to me that they are far more likely than tenure-track faculty to face

discrimination, suffer arbitrary decisions by the university administration, and experience uncertainty due to last-minute changes to (or disappearance of) work assignments, poor communication from administrators, and unfair promotion and evaluation processes. The position of non-tenure-track faculty in our university is, in that sense, a particularly egregious case of a larger problem, which is the exclusion of all faculty from any meaningful form of shared governance on our campus. Even some optimal form of shared governance cannot be a substitute for collective bargaining, but this is in any case a meaningless comparison in our situation, since the university system functions essentially as a top-down, essentially authoritarian institution, in which it is the high-level administrators who make the final decisions on all the crucial questions. As an example of this at UMD, one can simply take a look at the way the whole range of financial decisions and deliberation has been removed from the purview of the faculty senate.

The right to collectively bargain would open the possibility for faculty to meaningfully participate in the decisions directing our higher education institutions and to begin reversing the troubling authoritarian tendencies that have crept into our workplace. It is by now a clearly established fact that collective bargaining helps improve the quality of instruction by addressing ballooning faculty-to-student classroom ratios. Research shows that collective bargaining makes universities more effective: for instance, by increasing student graduation rates. And it is also the case that collective bargaining would make our universities more efficient by preventing administrative bloat, making sure more state dollars go into the research and instruction that actually benefit Maryland residents. Finally, collective bargaining would not only offer faculty the security and dignity that should belong to every working individual, it would also help our state's university system to begin catching up to the top-level public university systems in this country. It is namely the case that among our national peer institutions those with collective bargaining for faculty on their campuses on average significantly outrank those without collective bargaining.

The majority of people in Maryland agree that collective bargaining between state employees and management is the best way to protect democracy in our workplaces and public institutions. The right to collectively bargain is currently granted to many other public higher ed institutions in the country, and indeed, to most public employees in Maryland. The reasons to exempt university faculty in 4-year public institutions from what should be a basic human right make absolutely no sense. It is time to treat us with basic human dignity!

Sincerely,

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