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Senate Bill 84 – State Personnel - Collective Bargaining - Graduate Assistants
Finance Committee
January 29, 2026

FAVORABLE

The Baltimore Teachers Union represents over 9,000 employees of Baltimore City Public Schools, including teachers, paraprofessionals, school secretaries, counselors, librarians, clinicians, transportation aides, and school support staff. Our members are on the frontlines of public education everyday, and strive to ensure a safe learning environment for the students we serve. Our work to educate, support and develop Baltimore City’s young people, is grounded in the protections and rights we have from collective bargaining, and we recognize that all workers deserve the right to have a meaningful voice in their working conditions. As educators, our legacy of collective bargaining has long advocated for the learning conditions that students need in order to thrive, as our working conditions are our students’ learning conditions. The Baltimore Teachers Union is writing in strong **support** of SB 84 and **we request that the committee issue a favorable report.**

Graduate assistants are essential to the functioning of our colleges and universities. They teach classes, lead discussion sections and labs, grade assignments, mentor undergraduates, conduct research, and provide critical instructional support—often while carrying heavy academic workloads of their own. Yet too often, these workers do not have fair compensation, stable appointments, or a meaningful voice in their working conditions. This bill recognizes the reality of their labor and affirms that graduate assistants are workers who deserve the same fundamental rights as others in the public sector: the right to unionize and collectively bargain over wages, hours, and working conditions.

Collective bargaining strengthens higher education. When graduate assistants have a seat at the table, institutions benefit from improved retention, more consistent instruction, and stronger academic support for students. Fair workloads, reasonable pay, access to healthcare, and clear job protections allow graduate workers to focus on teaching and research rather than financial insecurity or burnout. In turn, undergraduates receive higher-quality instruction, more mentorship, and more stable learning environments, while universities benefit from a more sustainable and equitable workforce.

At a time when public higher education is under immense pressure, we must invest in the people who make it possible. Extending collective bargaining rights to graduate assistants is not only a matter of workplace fairness—it is an investment in educational quality, academic excellence, and student success.

For these reasons, the Baltimore Teachers Union urges a favorable report on this bill. Thank you for your time and consideration.