

Testimony from Charles Reisner

I am a second year graduate student in the Astronomy department at UMD. In that time, one thing has become blatantly clear to me— despite what the UMS lobbyists or the administration claims about the university not being able to afford to recognize the graduate labor union, the opposite is true. The university system, and by extension, the state of Maryland, can't afford not to recognize us. As graduate workers at UMD, we bring in around \$748 million dollars for the university annually in research alone. This isn't counting the revenue generated by teaching assistants, many of whom are balancing teaching, classes, and research. If graduate students can afford food and rent, the quality of their research will increase, the quality of their teaching will increase, and by extension the quality of the university will increase. Over the past several months, I've represented my department in our efforts to unionize. In that time, I've talked to hundreds of graduate students in person and over the phone. The main source of apprehension I get is always the same. International students are scared. The statement usually goes, "I am completely supportive of the union's efforts, but I just can't put my name or face out there right now". These aren't just 'students' and these aren't kids— these are employees who do most of the heavy lifting for the university, and they don't feel safe. How will this look to a prospective graduate student deciding between a university in the USM system and somewhere else? That's why we don't see the ratification of this bill as a cost to the state, but an investment. We love our jobs and the research we do. What we're asking is that we can continue to do them here.