

**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's Alex Leitch, and I am a full-time non-tenure-track professor of interaction design at the University of Maryland, College Park. I am working with my colleagues in United Academics 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 a Lecturer in the College of Information for the past six years and a recent permanent resident of Maryland, I am one of a limited number of Maryland public employees lacking these rights.

While all faculty and all state employees deserve collective bargaining rights, non-tenure-track faculty are among the most vulnerable. While I have skills that are valuable to industry, my main role is teaching students the everyday job of getting interfaces into screens. This involves both programming and graphic design at a high level, with elements of cognitive science. The field moves quickly and changes very rapidly, necessitating a lot of engagement with industry on my part. UI/UX is a detailed and hands-on job, but every year, the number of students I am responsible for educating increases. Class sizes sneak up on you. In my first semester in 2019, a section of students was fifty people. If you agreed to take on an overload class, an additional fifty people might be added, but consistent compensation was available for the extra load. A section is now anywhere from 35 to 150 students, with no consistency expected in instructional support or classroom facilities. This means that I am even now teaching four sections of students - they even appear in the system as four sections - for three sections' pay. The decisions around scheduling these classes and this work are entirely opaque, and are inconsistent year to year. This has resulted in my preparing a wild variety of course structures, as a lack of consistency in expected student population and delivery format has changed what exercises can be effectively delivered to students. While I have received good evaluations, they have been delivered inconsistently, and I often have no idea what a success might look like at the college or university level. I often receive good reviews only to find myself outside of decisions about my courses that directly impact me.

There have been administrative knock-on effects as well. While I am technically part of the shared governance of the university in that I have been part of hiring conversations, these are not actually binding; high-level administrators make all the final calls. This means that most administration of my work appears disconnected from the work itself. I am not able to influence choices like how many students might be accepted to the college, or where our budget for supplies or materials might go. I am often unable to get a clear answer as to whether we can even sustain guest lecturers, or who is allowed to invite speakers, which again impacts the student experience.

Non-tenure track faculty at UMD represent a significant population of faculty. We are responsible for a shocking number of administrative, research, and teaching roles, but are often treated as an afterthought to the talent. This is despite the fact that our pay is locked to a lower level than tenure-track faculty right from the get go, and that thanks to our contract structure, we are on the chopping block the moment a budget downturns. Everyone is on a contract, and those contracts are not renewed through negotiation; they are all very take-it-or-leave-it, a one-sided system that does not allow for real flexibility on either

side. As a consequence, non-tenure track faculty have very little job security and a great deal of responsibility for what happens at the university. We are nonetheless dedicated to our work, delivering classes, administration, and world-class research across the campus day-in-day-out.

Maryland benefits hugely from the College Park project, winning in many areas despite our dismal football record. We deliver educational outcomes, with students going on to benefit the state from all of our departments, from information through to agriculture. We are the core of the College Park community and the engine that drives the Discovery District. Wherever I go in the world, I meet Terrapins who are proud of our state and our university, and often, their favourite professors are non-tenure-track on a three-year contract with no guarantee they'll be teaching the same class or same class size in any two semesters lined up together. We believe in our students and want to provide them with a quality education that will lead to a life of excellence and a great future. We're excited to see Maryland - "best state in the union!" - glow on a national and international stage.

The right to collectively bargain is already retained by basically all other Maryland public employees and USM institutions. It is through this right that non-tenure track faculty, and hopefully soon all faculty, will have the voice they deserve in our state.

Sincerely,

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