



MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND
WOMEN'S DEMOCRATIC CLUB

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Senate Bill 0084: State Personnel - Collective Bargaining - Graduate Assistants

**Advancing Democracy Committee – January 25, 2026
SUPPORT**

Thank you for this opportunity to submit written testimony concerning an important priority of the **Montgomery County Women's Democratic Club** (WDC) for the 2026 legislative session. WDC is one of Maryland's largest and most active Democratic clubs with hundreds of politically active members, including many elected officials.

WDC urges a favorable report of SB0084. This bill extends collective bargaining rights to Graduate Assistants in the University of Maryland system. WDC supports this bill because collective bargaining agreements are one of the best ways to protect women in higher education.

According to a 2016 [study](#), about a third of women in graduate programs experience sexual or gender-based harassment at the hands of faculty or staff at the university. These experiences run the gamut from condescending and misogynistic remarks about women's intelligence, to pregnancy discrimination, to unwanted sexual advances and assaults. Many women [do not report](#) this harassment because they are afraid of professional retaliation and do not trust their university to fairly adjudicate their case. When a victim makes a complaint, she is often alone and up against a perpetrator with more status, more power, a deeper network, and more money. This imbalanced system has led to [multiple scandals](#) in higher education, where repeat perpetrators have historically gotten slaps on the wrist or escaped accountability for decades.

A collective bargaining agreement [evens the playing field](#) and allows more women to feel safe coming forward in the face of sexual and gender-based harassment at universities. Within the grievance arbitration process afforded by labor law, victims can choose to address their problem with the full legal and material backing of their union. Instead of facing a biased, opaque system alone, women can come to the arbitration table as a union member on equal footing with their employer.

Collective bargaining has been one of the primary ways graduate workers have [won](#) real protections against sexual harassment and discrimination. Graduate assistants at UMD deserve the chance to get these protections, like their private sector counterparts at universities like Johns Hopkins and like other public employees in the state that have long had the right to collectively bargain.

We ask for your support for SB0084.

Cynthia Rubenstein
WDC President

Dorothy Manevich
WDC Advancing Democracy
Subcommittee

Kate Stein
WDC Advocacy Chair