

**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 James "Ward" Morrow, and sadly I have to yet again call on this committee to immediately issue a favorable report to this Bill, and in fact amend it to include all higher education faculty. The state already grants the right of collective bargaining towards nearly every other state employee, including managers, as well as the faculty at our community colleges and the non-academic workforce at our four-year institutions. Why are any faculty excluded.

This right should be extended to all higher ed workers in Maryland and should have been done so years ago when it was extended to state employees. Although I am a practicing labor and employment attorney, with 26 years in public sector labor law, I do not enjoy the rights that I teach my students about in almost all other public sector worksites and K-12 teaching positions. Even in my day job of 22 years as Assistant General Counsel for the American Federation of Government Employees, the lawyers, and most all non-management staff, all enjoy the benefits of collective bargaining and a union contract.

This is not my great grandfather's labor movement. The steel mills of old have essentially closed, but the Maryland Public Defenders Office lawyers, and many other professional employees, now happily carry a union card. While I am fortunate to have a day job with many benefits, many adjuncts do not. They are forced, due to exceedingly low wages, to teach as many classes at as many institutions as they can. For the most part, we have doctorates or other professional degrees, but have no or limited tenure, unaffordable health insurance, and no retirement as there is generally nothing left to put into a 401k. This is not sustainable, and we cannot keep balancing the state budget on the backs of frontline higher education professionals. Worse for all contract faculty, we have essentially no real worksite rights, we do not have even the fig leaf of tenure, and we do not have any protections to whistle blow regarding waste, fraud, mismanagement, or abuse.

Unions advocate for better wages and working conditions, this translates into attracting the best teaching applicants, and ultimately to the most highly sought after professors and instructors. The reputation of higher education institutions leads jurisdictions to being competitive in economic develop, in turn making businesses in Maryland more profitable. It's not a coincidence that states with the lowest unionization rates have lower levels of literacy.

For those of us still concerned about diversity, equity, and inclusion, I am reminded of my friend the late Congressman Eligh Cummings who was a keynote speaker at an American Federation of Teachers-Maryland conference years ago. He asked us to look around the room. We lived in different neighborhoods, attended different places of worship, represented many different ethnic groups and backgrounds. He noted that almost nowhere else in many folks lives will they experience such diversity and inclusion on a daily basis than in a union, where all such folks come together with common interest to improve the wages and working conditions of its members. And in the educational field, we want to continue to attract our better angels, allow them to live in dignity, and focus on the critical mission of instructing our next generation.

They should not be focused on barely having enough money to pay healthcare premiums or having any money left over for a retirement. Without a union, who is left to stand up for instructors when the book banning crowd arrives, who will represent them if they are improperly accused, will they have any rights at the worksite? As we in Maryland know well, the strongest guardrails still left for federal employees are union rights. That is why they are under attack by the Trump Administration and Project 2025. Why the wait to extend them to all Maryland higher education faculty.

Additionally, in addition to teaching Labor Law at the University of Maryland School of Law, I serve as the only adjunct member of the UMB Faculty Senate and a member of the statewide Council of University Faculty Senate. Faculty Senates have supported the right to have collective bargaining for higher education faculty. This is not simply a union bill, its a faculty supported bill and has been for over 20 years.

This may not seem like my great grandfather's labor movement, but he'd certainly recognize the similar concerns with wages and working conditions. Please do not play cross over timing type games with this important bill. It should have passed years ago, it should have passed last year, it needs to pass immediately.

There is nothing left to study, there is no need for lengthy debate as this is nothing more than other state employees and k-12 teachers already have. Si se puede!

I again therefore call for a favorable report to this Bill. Vote YES!

Sincerely,

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