

**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 Nicole Steinberg. I am a Maryland resident and a part-time, non-tenure track (adjunct) professor of musicology at the University of Maryland, College Park (UMD). I am also an adjunct faculty member at Towson University, another institution within the University System of Maryland (USM). 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. While most Maryland public employees have the right to collectively bargain, faculty like me remain among the few who do not. This lack of basic workplace rights affects my livelihood, my students, and higher education in Maryland as a whole.

As a non-tenure track faculty member, I am among the most vulnerable workers of the university system. Like many adjunct faculty, I have had to teach as many as five courses per semester across two different USM institutions simply to make ends meet. At UMD, I am paid less than \$5,300 per course per semester (before taxes) for 15-16 weeks of instruction. This pay is intended to cover course preparation, classroom instruction, supervision of teaching assistants, grading, student support, and administrative work. In reality, it does not even come close. For each course, I routinely work at least 20 hours per week. When this labor is calculated hourly, it amounts to roughly \$17 per hour for highly specialized work requiring an advanced degree, professional expertise, and constant evaluation. At Towson, the pay is even lower (around \$4,500 per course). Furthermore, at Towson I teach with no teaching assistants, which means more grading and unpaid labor. Universities increasingly rely on adjuncts and other non-tenure track faculty to provide a significant portion of university instruction at an embarrassingly low cost. To put it plainly, we are treated as cheap labor. The expectations placed on us for our essential work are high, and the financial support offered is minimal.

The low pay is just facet of the problem. Adjunct faculty face other inequities that make the job even more unsustainable. We have limited or no access to affordable health insurance in comparison to full-time faculty and staff. We are not guaranteed office space, which prohibits our ability to meet privately with students or do professional work. We are often given unpredictable work assignments, as courses may disappear from one semester to the next. Furthermore, budgets for adjunct instruction are often the first to be cut. This instability makes long-term planning (financial, professional, and personal) extremely difficult. Most importantly, it impacts students, who depend on consistent instruction, mentoring, and continuity within their academic programs.

I am deeply committed to academia. As an early-career scholar, I am working to build the teaching, research, and publication record necessary to complete for a future tenure-track position. The economic reality of adjunct labor, however, makes this nearly impossible. To survive, I must accept heavy teaching loads across multiple campuses, leaving little time for the research, writing, and professional development that universities themselves expect from those seeking long-term academic careers. This creates a vicious cycle: adjunct faculty are expected to be excellent educators and scholars, yet the system denies us the stability and

support we need to remain competitive and thus improve the reputation of the university.

Despite these challenges, I remain committed to my students and to the mission of public higher education. I have taught musicology and ethnomusicology courses for majors and non-majors, in person and online, including introductory surveys, advanced twentieth- and twenty-first-century topics, and writing-intensive seminars. My courses situate music within broader social, political, and urban contexts, while emphasizing critical listening, strong writing, and interdisciplinary and multicultural perspectives. I design multi-faceted syllabi, create inclusive learning environments grounded in respect and equity, and support students with diverse backgrounds and learning goals. I substantially contribute to the educational missions and reputations of USM institutions.

As an adjunct faculty member, however, I lack meaningful access to shared governance. I do not have the opportunity to contribute to the decisions that shape our work and our students' learning, including budget priorities, work assignments and teaching loads, job security and reappointment systems, salary structures, and evaluation procedures. These decisions are of the utmost importance to the stability of programs, and yet they are being made without meaningful input from a portion of the faculty who do so much of the teaching.

Non-tenure track faculty are asking for the basic workplace rights that most Maryland public employees already have. Collective bargaining is one of the most effective ways to protect democratic values in public institutions. Most importantly, improving the working conditions of non-tenure track faculty directly improves learning conditions for students. When instructors are stable, supported, and able to plan for the future, students benefit through stronger advising and consistency in the quality of educational instruction.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

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