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## **HOUSE GOVERNMENT, LABOR, AND ELECTIONS COMMITTEE**

Senate Bill 84

State Personnel – Collective Bargaining – Graduate Assistants

April 7, 2026

Unfavorable

Chair Wells, Vice Chair Kerr, and members of the committee: on behalf of the University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC), I write in opposition of the legislation sponsored by Senators Kramer and Lam pertaining to granting collective bargaining rights to graduate assistants at two University System of Maryland institutions – UMBC and the University of Maryland, College Park (UMCP).

While UMBC respectfully opposes this legislation, if passed, it is important to note a preference for the Senate’s proposed effective date in 2028 to allow time for the proper implementation of such a complex and significant change.

At UMBC, Masters and Doctoral students play a critical role in the academic and administrative functions of the institution and gain advanced training within and beyond their program of study. Currently 697 graduate students serve as full- and part-time administrative, teaching, and research assistants supporting UMBC’s infrastructure for the spring 2026 semester.

Areas of concern with the proposed legislation include but are not limited to several points. The proposed legislation is detrimental to the institutional infrastructure wherein graduate students serve administrative functions, teach core and elective classes, and lead research activities. Students will be less likely to consider UMBC their top choice without financial support, resulting in lower enrollment compounded with decreased federal funding and state-allocated funding. Collective bargaining agreements could introduce additional cost pressure on the institution that may reduce the number of assistantships available, limit access to graduate education, and/or result in redirecting funding away from academic programs and student support. Future admitted students would obtain increased debt to pursue graduate education.

For the reasons outlined above, I respectfully urge an unfavorable report on SB 84. My colleagues and I at UMBC who support graduate students would welcome the opportunity to work collaboratively on alternative approaches that strengthen support for graduate assistants while preserving flexibility and sustainability needed in a higher education system.