Written Testimony Submitted to the
Maryland House Government, Labor and Elections Committee
HB0106
State Personnel - Collective Bargaining - Nontenure Track Faculty
February 10, 2026
FAVORABLE

Good afternoon Chair Wells, Vice Chair Kerr, and members of the House Government, Labor and Elections Committee.

My name is Dr. Benjamin Farcy, I am a full time, non-tenured, professional track (PTK) faculty at the Department of Astronomy at the University of Maryland, College Park. I currently work as a cooperative agreement scientist at NASA Goddard Space Flight Center, through which I have been able to deliver novel technology for robotic exploration of the solar system and new scientific discoveries of the planets. While I am proud of my career and the work I've done, there are issues related to funding, job security, and university-level self governance that we, as UMD faculty, want the power to address ourselves. Through our local union, the United Academics of Maryland (UAM), and our national union, the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), we are working to secure collective bargaining rights for researchers and faculty at Maryland's flagship university. Despite the value that I and other non-tenure faculty bring to the university and the state, we are without our basic rights to collectively bargain and effectively advocate for ourselves.

PTK faculty at UMD are especially vulnerable in the current funding and political climate, as major changes that directly affect our lives and jobs seem to occur regularly. Being outside of regular faculty structure, I am currently working in a soft-money position, meaning my job and salary is dependent on outside grant funding. My ability to write grant proposals is what keeps me employed at UMD, not the science I do. Because of this, my job entails spending months of arduous, bureaucratic work to write funding proposals to government agencies, most of which are denied due to low available funding. Despite the fact that I am on track to deliver multiple spaceflight instruments for lunar and planetary exploration, my current grant expires in October of this year. If I cannot secure outside funding, I will lose my job. Further, the government has recently been cancelling federal grant funding arbitrarily, meaning that there is a chance that what money we have left may be clawed back without notice. And with more budget cuts to science on the horizon, non-tenured researchers will instead have to focus their time and energy to compete with each other for fewer and fewer resources.

I know that as a soft-money researcher without tenure, I have little recourse to fix this. While the ability to maintain basic job security is something we are all fighting for, I personally feel I have little voice in advocating for myself and other people in my position to the university. Specifically, PTK faculty are not under the umbrella of shared governance at the department or university level. The decisions passed by the university senate are non-binding, and are regularly overturned by the Board of Regents. While all we want to see is better job security for the work we do, individual PTK faculty cannot change the employment structure at the university level. That is why collective bargaining is the only true way to empower the faculty at the University of Maryland to advocate for themselves.

The faculty and researchers at the University of Maryland are world class talents. They bring innovations in science, technology, art, and the humanities, that makes the state of Maryland one of the most prosperous in the country. Personally, the work that I have led through UMD has enabled new technology for analytical chemistry, multiple scientific publications, and led to the establishment of small technology startups in the state of Maryland. Engineering

contractors have trained and employed the next generation of talent through our UMD project. The future of planetary exploration, the rovers, landers, and orbiters that will carry the United States through the space race of the 21st century, will run through the dedicated research workforce of the University of Maryland. However, to bring that future forward, this workforce will need our right to collectively bargain. Passing this right into law will ensure that this next generation of scientists, researchers, and technologists can do the best work they can, while giving us the life and career we've worked for.

It is through our right to collectively bargain - a right granted to nearly all Maryland Public Employees and USM peer institutions - that non tenure track faculty, researchers, and tenured faculty alike, can have the voice they deserve.

Sincerely,

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