

**In support of HB 106 – extending collective bargaining rights to non-tenure track faculty
-with amendment.**

Thomas W. Abrams, Professor Retired, University of Maryland School of Medicine

As the recent vice chair of Council of University System Faculty or CUSF, I have been impressed that CUSF has, for the past 15 years, consistently, supported granting faculty at the University System of Maryland the right to collectively bargain. Our last vote at CUSF in December was unanimous in support of our resolution in favor of Collective Bargaining rights for faculty. My testimony today is from myself as an individual retired USM professor and as Maryland taxpayer, not as a representative of CUSF or the UMB School of Medicine.

Based on my own experience working with CUSF, I strongly support the legislature extending collective bargaining rights to our faculty at USM. Despite the widespread perception, the primary impact of collective bargaining for faculty would not be on salaries; on the contrary, faculty salaries can not be dictated by a union, where the legislature and the governor have the authority over spending. This is especially the case in an era where our state faces major fiscal challenges. Rather, the primary benefit of a union is to ensure that faculty voices on key academic issues are taken seriously. The University System of Maryland is organized around the principle of Shared Governance. Ideally, Shared Governance would give faculty a seat at the table during decision making on important issues. Unfortunately, in the occasional situations where administrators make arbitrary decisions that are not well justified, faculty input can simply be ignored. Although this occurs only in a minority of situations, when the leadership of a department or school is weak and insecure, and capricious or self-serving decisions are challenged, faculty input can seem threatening. Thus, there can be retribution against faculty members who express positions that conflict with the administrator's objectives.

Many state universities across the country have collective bargaining rights for their faculty. Speaking with colleagues at universities such as the State University of New York, they find that collective bargaining results in more balanced, well considered decision making. It is our faculty who best understand the needs of our universities, whether for strengthening education of our students in Maryland or in supporting the research mission at USM, which is a critical economic engine for this state. The collective bargaining process would create a requirement for meaningful consideration of faculty perspectives. Collective bargaining rights would also improve our ability to attract the very best faculty members to our state's public university.

As written, this bill applies only to non-tenure track faculty. At a minimum, faculty on the tenure track who do not yet have the protection of tenure should also be permitted to participate in collective bargaining. Therefore, I strongly recommend you amend this bill to include all non-tenured faculty. Ideally, restrictions on collective bargaining should be removed for all State of Maryland university faculty, if not this year, then in the near future. Thank you for considering this recommendation.