

Delores G. Kelley, Chair
Brian J. Feldman, Vice Chair
3 East Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

SB 658
Supporting

Dear Chair Kelley, Vice Chair Feldman, and Members of the Finance Committee,

I am writing to express my support for the passage of HB214 / SB 658, known as the Graduate Assistant Collective Bargaining Fairness Act. As a graduate assistant (GA) at the University of Maryland, College Park I play an integral role in the continuous operation of university functions. For example, over this past academic year I have taught two separate undergraduate courses on the topic of American history, politics, and culture. These were designed, taught, and graded entirely by me with little to no supervision. It goes without saying that had I not been there to teach those classes they simply would not have taken place, and my students would have been left unserved and uneducated—which would violate university principles and purposes.

As well as teaching students, I am also the co-chair of the Graduate Assistant Advisory Committee (GAAC), a body that represents the 4,000 graduate assistants currently employed by UMD College Park. GAAC is the meet-and-confer body that was created a few years back in lieu of extending collective bargaining rights to GAs. Its purpose is to develop a line of communication and mutual cooperation between graduate assistants and the graduate school administration. Over the years however we have encountered repeated problems in getting administrators to ameliorate labor conditions on campus. We have found that, without collective bargaining rights, it is extraordinarily difficult to get what GAs need from the school in order to create a safe and healthy working environment. I adamantly believe that the right to unionize would allow GAAC to advocate for the needs of GAs much more effectively and successfully.

Thank you for your consideration,

Adelaida Shelley
PhD Student, Department of American Studies
Teaching Assistant, Department of American Studies
Co-chair, Graduate Assistant Advisory Committee

7517 Blair Rd, Apt 14
Takoma Park, MD 20912
ashelley@umd.edu