

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 HB 214/SB 658, known as the Higher Education - Collective Bargaining - Graduate Assistants (Graduate Assistant Collective Bargaining Fairness Act). I have been a graduate assistant at the University of Maryland College Park for the last five years. In that time I have been both a research assistant and a teaching assistant.

As a research assistant at the University of Maryland, I have contributed to the completion of tasks and deliverables for research grants awarded to the faculty at the University of Maryland in the form of published papers, data sets, data validation, annual reports to the funding agencies, conference presentations, and science team meeting presentations. Without the work of graduate assistants, like myself, the obligations of the grants awarded to the faculty would not be met, which in turn would damage the potential for securing future grant funding.

As a teaching assistant and graduate instructor, I have taught and TA'd for courses that are required for our undergraduate major. I have been in charge of overseeing lab sections, creating and updating lecture and lab materials and practice problem sets, assigning class readings, and grading assignments and exams for classes ranging in size from 6 to 250. Without TAs and, like myself, the lecturers and tenure track faculty would be too overwhelmed with work to effectively teach students effectively, and without graduate instructors, some classes would go untaught entirely.

I personally have been asked to perform duties beyond the scope of my assistantship and had little to no recourse due to the ambiguity and lack of real workplace protections for graduate students, since we are not regular employees, despite the fact that we play a vital role in the functioning of the University. While I understand that this is a complex issue, I strongly support the right for graduate students to unionize in order to ensure the proper workplace protections and better advocate for our needs.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Meredith G. L. Brown
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