



HOWARD COUNTY OFFICE OF COUNTY EXECUTIVE

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Senator Delores G. Kelley, Chair
Finance Committee
Miller Senate Office Building, 3 East
Annapolis, MD 21041

Re: Testimony **IN SUPPORT** of SB 746: Education - Community Colleges – Collective Bargaining

Dear Chair Kelley and Members of the Committee:

I am pleased to announce my support for Senate Bill 746, which would grant the right to collectively bargain to adjunct faculty and staff at our state's 16 community colleges. More than 14,000 faculty and staff at four community colleges in Maryland have access to this option. Senate Bill 746 would expand this bargaining power to the state's remaining community colleges. Passage of this bill would allow faculty and staff the choice join 100,000 K-12 instructors and 60,000 state employees who are able to negotiate their working conditions.

Often in times of economic uncertainty, our community colleges become a refuge for students and parents seeking more affordable options for higher education. In 2020, adjunct faculty members have helped an estimated 108,300 community college students enrolled in Maryland community colleges. So many of these students are gaining the knowledge and technical skills they need to compete in the post-pandemic recovery economy. Senate Bill 746 would benefit these students by giving their instructors the necessary leverage to potentially secure additional office space and office hours to support supplemental instruction. This would mean more time for students to absorb class materials and improve their performance.

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, our investment in our staff at two-year institutions are that much more critical. Educators across the state have adapted their own work lives to maintain their own safety and the safety of their students. They are teaching in virtual classrooms so that their students can continue their educational journeys under unique circumstances.

Unfortunately, community college educators and staff lack the bargaining power that their colleagues in K-12 and four-year universities have used to negotiate their own COVID-19 working conditions.

Giving Maryland's community college staff collective bargaining power also gives them a stronger say in how their institutions care for the health and safety of the entire college community. This bill does not mandate unionization in Maryland's community colleges. It simply empowers community college employees to decide for themselves whether a union serves their needs.



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If our community colleges are to mold a talented and resilient workforce, we must listen to the dedicated professionals that put their students first every day and respect their choices.

As a former educator, I am proud of the work that employees at Howard Community College—one of the best colleges in the nation—has been able to achieve to create a highly skilled workforce. In 2019, Howard Community College received the prestigious *Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award*, which measures organizational success and performance excellence. This presidential-level honor highlights the critical services our college provides our community. The college's talented faculty and staff have helped increase graduation rates, expand opportunities for economic mobility, and empower learners of all ages and backgrounds. These public servants are creating a significant return on investment for our county and therefore, the state every day.

In FY 2021, my Administration allocated \$36.5 million to Howard Community College, a 2 percent increase over the previous fiscal year's allocation. Through this investment, my Administration was able to provide for adequate support needs and the hiring of 3 new full-time faculty positions and an associate financial aid director to help the growing number of students in need. These employees will contribute to the vitality of one of Howard County's educational crown jewels. As local governments do their part to support our community college workers, state level legislative changes can create new possibilities for them to seek higher wages, more stable working conditions, and improve productivity.

The vast majority of community college faculty and staff enter the educational field because they are passionate about imparting their knowledge and skills. I commend Sen. Guzzone for introducing legislation that would elevate the voices of our educators. An empowered community college staff will keep our higher education institutions and students strong and successful.

For these and many more reasons, I urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 746.

Sincerely,

Calvin Ball
Howard County Executive