

WHY DOES THE UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA NEED PELRA REFORM?

PELRA is supposed to guarantee the right to collective bargaining for Minnesota's public employees. However, as currently written, PELRA prevents over 23,000 faculty, staff, and student workers at the University of Minnesota from forming common sense unions. These workers simply want the same opportunities and protections as any other group of public employees in our state.

To restore the right to unionize across the U of M, the legislature must pass SF 4597/HF 4508 and:

1. *Eliminate statutorily-mandated bargaining units that prevent unionization and are out of step with the U of M workforce.*
2. *Clearly state that U of M workers know best who belongs in their unions.*
3. *Restore the collective bargaining rights of workers who receive financial aid, participate in work-study programs, work part-time, or are paid through stipends or waivers.*



Why do we need to eliminate the unorganized U of M bargaining units in PELRA?

Thousands of U of M employees are trapped in 'catch-all' bargaining units that make unionization effectively impossible. For decades, these units have been packed with new hires who share little in common, and organized employees have been reclassified out of their unions and into these 'catch-alls.' This has resulted in a massive concentration of workers into non-union jobs. Although only 4 of 13 mandated units are non-union, these 4 now hold about $\frac{2}{3}$ of the U of M workforce.

These units are deeply flawed. They consist of hundreds of dissimilar positions spread across the state. Employees who *do* perform similar jobs often find themselves divided between two or more units. For example, a Twin Cities lecturer shares a mandated bargaining unit with thousands of HR, IT, and administrative staffers across the five campuses--including the Director of Athletics. Yet, the same lecturer is barred from unionizing with the adjunct professor one classroom over.

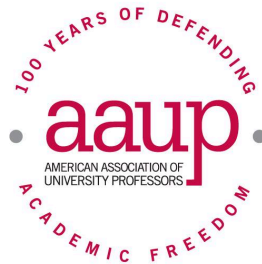
U of M workers deserve the same rights as other public sector employees, not mandated units that undermine their interests. These units radically depart from the standards of public and private sector labor law. The legislature must remove them and restore common sense labor relations on campus.

Why do certain campus workers need a place in PELRA?

Many U of M workers cannot join unions due to their conditions of employment, compensation, and calculation of hours.

- Instructors' hours are systematically undercounted. Those teaching one course are recorded as working just 13.5 hours per week--30 minutes short of the PELRA minimum for collective bargaining--even though most instructors devote far more time to their students.
- PELRA already recognizes *some* student workers as public employees. However, these rights are denied to student workers who need financial aid or work-study programs to pay for college.
- Graduate workers who win fellowships lose their status as public employees and the protections of collective bargaining, even when they see no change in their jobs.
- Postdoctoral fellows provide cutting edge research but may not be classified as public employees.
- Professional students who provide highly technical services on campus may lose their status as public employees due to the allocation of their hours.

These groups perform essential services and advance the university's mission of education, research, and outreach. However, according to PELRA, they are not public employees. The legislature must close these loopholes that needlessly deny collective bargaining rights to thousands of workers.



April 19, 2024

Representative Liz Olson, Chair
Ways and Means Committee

Chair Olson and Members of the Ways and Means Committee,

We are faculty members at the University of Minnesota, writing on behalf of the UMN Twin Cities Chapter of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), to express our concern for the unjust and unusual barriers that we and over 23,000 other university employees face in exercising our rights to bargain collectively under the MN Public Employees Labor Relations Act (PELRA). We urge you to support Article 6 (University of Minnesota Collective Bargaining) of HF 5217.

The AAUP is a nonprofit membership association of faculty and other academic professionals dedicated to advancing academic freedom and shared governance, defining fundamental professional values and standards for higher education, promoting the economic security of faculty, academic professionals, graduate students, postdoctoral fellows, and all those engaged in teaching and research in higher education, helping the higher education community organize to realize those goals and ensuring higher education's contribution to the common good. Each of those objectives are hindered by restrictions on the collective bargaining rights of university employees.

As you know, PELRA is a statute that provides rights and procedures for unionization among public employees. The law currently includes carve outs, barriers, and loopholes for the U of M that make it extraordinarily difficult for most university workers to unionize. For example, thousands of university workers have been crammed into Bargaining Units 11 ("Academic Professional and Administrative Staff Unit") and 12 ("Noninstructional Professional Unit"). These units consist of hundreds of dissimilar job codes across the five campuses, making unionizing and collective bargaining impossible as a practical matter. Other campus workers are denied the right to unionize because they work part time, rely on financial aid, or are paid through stipends or waivers.

As scholars of labor history and/or labor law, we are struck by how unusual these designated bargaining units are. In the private sector and in many public-sector contexts, groups of workers typically propose bargaining units, which are then approved as long as they reflect genuine communities of interest within a workplace.

The proposed legislation would affirm that U of M workers who are not already unionized may organize and bargain collectively—subject to agency approval—based on their shared interests. It would also restore collective bargaining rights to other university workers who are currently excluded from PELRA's protections. This bill has the backing of the MN AFL-CIO, major public sector unions, and the Undergraduate Student Government, among others. Our message is clear: U of M workers deserve the same collective bargaining opportunities that other public sector workers enjoy.

In an era when university faculty face increasing pressure to avoid controversial topics, it is particularly important that faculty have the protections for academic freedom that collective bargaining can provide. While all faculty need such protections, they are particularly critical for the untenured faculty who perform an increasing portion of the teaching at the U of M.

We encourage you to support this legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Charlotte Garden". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name clearly legible.

Charlotte Garden, Julius E. Davis Professor of Law, University of Minnesota

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "William P. Jones". The signature is highly stylized and cursive, with the first name clearly legible.

William P. Jones, Professor of History, University of Minnesota

On behalf of the UMN Twin Cities Chapter of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP)

Dear Chair Liz Olson and the Ways and Means Committee,

On behalf of the 30,000 undergraduate students our organization represents, we urge you to support Article 6 of HF 5217 to update PELRA to remove outdated bargaining unit determinations and ensure full collective bargaining rights for all student workers at the University of Minnesota. This Article is critical to ensuring all students at the University of Minnesota are given the same rights as other public sector employees.

Currently, the Minnesota Public Employee Relations Act (PELRA) rules around the definition of “employees” and designated “bargaining units” at the University of Minnesota do not work in ways that promote the organization of unions and the expansion of worker rights but have instead been used and manipulated to restrict worker rights and to make union organization as difficult as possible. For example, PELRA excludes full-time undergraduate students under work-study programs and students in connection with the receipt of financial aid from status as public employees. These restrictions are heavily felt on a campus where over 75% of the student body work while attending school.

This is not a radical proposal; many similar institutions have established support for undergraduate students gaining bargaining rights, including: Grinnell College, Dartmouth, California State University, University of Massachusetts at Amherst, Mount Holyoke, Barnard College, Fordham Wesleyan, and Tufts. Likewise, support for allowing undergraduates to unionize in Minnesota has been increasing, as noted by the recent unionization of undergraduates at Macalester College.

We therefore ask for your support for updating PELRA to remove outdated bargaining unit determinations and ensure full collective bargaining rights for all student workers at the University of Minnesota. Under these changes, we believe that all undergraduate workers, post-doctoral fellows, and graduate fellows at the University of Minnesota should be recognized as public employees, which will provide a pathway to collective bargaining for these employees. Additionally, we support alterations to PELRA to prevent attempts to undermine organizing, bargaining, and union composition by reclassifying workers and altering degree and graduation requirements.

We end by affirming the Executive Board of the Undergraduate Student Government’s support for all workers at the University of Minnesota, and encourage all Minnesota legislators to support these necessary changes to PELRA.

We ask that you consider our voices and vote to change these restrictions.

Sincerely,

The Executive Board of the Undergraduate Student Government at the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities

April 25, 2024

Minnesota House of Representatives
Ways and Means Committee
Minnesota State Office Building, Room 200
Saint Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chair Olson, Vice Chair Edelson, Republican Lead Garofalo, Committee Members Acomb, Agbaje, Becker-Finn, Freiberg, Gomez, Hassan, Heintzeman, Hornstein, Howard, Klevorn, Kresha, Liebling, Lillie, Moller, Nash, Noor, Novotny, Pelowski, Petersburg, Pfarr, Pinto, Rarick, Schomacker, Scott, and Youakim,

We write to you as Medical Residents and Fellows of the University of Minnesota (UMN) who are currently subject to MN Statute 179A.11 of the Public Employment Labor Relations Act (PELRA).

Residents and Fellows are “Matched” into programs in an algorithmic process that contractually binds us to work where we are assigned with no ability to negotiate the terms of our employment and very limited ability to seek other jobs if working conditions are poor. This matching process was exempted from federal antitrust law after a then resident Dr. Paul Jung and colleagues pursued class action antitrust litigation against the National Resident Matching Program, the body that governs the Match.¹ Before the suit was heard, US Congress quickly passed a law prohibiting residents and fellows from pursuing this type of litigation.²

Residents and Fellows work longer and less desirable hours for a fraction of the pay of mid-level providers within the same field. The majority, 73 percent, of us are also deeply in debt: the median education debt for residents in 2019 was \$200,000.³ We are trapped by the combination of our debt, low wages, and the fact that we must complete our residency training in order to have a career caring for the sick. Additionally, being removed from residency is a black mark that is hard to wash off. So when residents are pushed to work longer hours than the 80 hour a week Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education limit, or pressured not to take the limited parental or sick leave we are entitled to, most of us put our heads down and show up to care for our patients, too exhausted to change a broken system.

The proposed changes to PELRA in Article 6 of HF 5217 would allow UMN Medical Residents and Fellows to collectively bargain. We have unique working conditions and a very clear community of interest as we all share a contract and benefits under the umbrella of Graduate Medical Education. PELRA as it currently stands allows the University to treat us as either students or employees when it sees fit, and it lumps us into the preposterously large and varied Unit 11.

Unionizing UMN Residents and Fellows would enable us to advocate for our patients and against the corporatization of healthcare delivery that is negatively impacting the care we provide and putting at risk our land grant mission to Minnesotans. As the great state of Minnesota is rethinking what our academic health center should be, Residents and Fellows want to be able to organize and help shape that future. We plan to advocate for our patients, your friends and relatives, either way but together we will have a stronger voice.

Sincerely,

The undersigned 187 UMN Residents and Fellows listed below in alphabetical order by last name.

Allison Aase, DO
Tasneem Abdel-Karim, MBBS
Aaron Ackerman, MD
Jalal Agakishiev, DO
Loretta O. Akpala, MD
Michael Andreone, MD
Ashwini Arumugam, MD
Jeremiah Atkinson, MD
Elizabeth Babkin, MD
Danica Balsiger, MD
Madeline Barnes, MD
Kristen Bastug, MD
Allen Bergstedt, MD
Wyatt Biebighauser-Wagner, MD
Emily Biscaye, MD
Ryan Bjerke, MD
Taylor Brockman, MD
Taylor Brown, DO
Samantha Bryan, DO
A. Luise Calderon, MD
Cameron Callahan, MD, MPH
Gregory Carlisle, DO
Kelsey Carrigan, MD
Anna L. Carroll, MD
Lorenzo A. Castanon, MD
Katie Casty, MD, MS
Paul Chatterton, MD
Michael Chmielewski, MD
Devin Clark, MD
Andrea Clinch, MD
Miranda Considine, DO
Sam Considine, MD
Sara Adelina Cuadra Aruguete, MD
Hannah Cushen, MD
Nick Dabiran, MD
Nardos Dawit, MD
Owen R Dean, MD
Joe de Jonge, MD
Brianna Dickson, MD
Ninah Divine, MD
Ian Durbin, MD
Cheyenna Espinoza, MD
Hannah Fagen, MD
Rachel Feliciano, MD
Rebekah Fiers, MD
Nuala Flood, DO
Cynthia Gaines, MD
Jonathan Gale, DO
Reid Gamble, DO, MA
Eva Garrison, DO
Zachary German, MD
Rebecca Goldstein, MD, MPH
Mark Gormley, MD
Melissa Gunderson, MD
Anwei Gwan, MD, MPH, MS
Hasti Hadizadeh, MD
Harikrishna Halaharvi, DO
Jeffrey Hanson, MD, PharmD (alumni)
Mikako Harata, MD
Christine Harb, DO, MPH
Julia N. Harrison MD
Jennifer Hathaway, MD
Ali Hochstetler, MD
Cameron Holmes, MD
Gregory Hooks, MD
Rita Hurd, MD (alumni)
Kristin Inman, MD
Margurite Jakubiak, MD
Bilal Jawed, MD
Hannah Jessen, MD
Whitney Johnson, MD
Leah Jordan, MD (alumni)

Lindsay Juriga, MD
Farida Karim, MBBS
Sarah Kinsey, MD
Nathaniel Klair, MD
Cynthia Koenigsberg, MD
Julia Kohn, MD
Jack Kotecki, MD
Joseph E. Kumka, MD, PhD
Sean Larsen, MD, MS
David Leishman, MD, MS
Eric Leppink, MD
Alyssa Levine, MD
Xuan Li, MD
Pornlada Likasitwatanakul, MD
Sandy Liu, MD
Erica Loon, DO
Megan Lucas, MD
Friederike Luetzenberg, MD
Kimberly Lundeen, MD
Daniel V Ly, MD
Robyn Marks, DO
Rachel McCabe, MD
Kaitlin McLean, MD
Dillon Medlock, MD
Alycia Midas, MD
Mitchell Moe, MD
Danny Mohama, MD
Lauren Mohan, MD
Pedro Monsalve Diaz, MD
Joshua Morof, MD, MPH
Patricia Morrow, MD
Eric Nagarajan, MD
Sashi N Nair, MD
Sabrina Nesladek, MD
Caroline Nyamweya Tekeste, DO, MS
Jenna Nypan, MD
Christina Nyquist, MD
Brandon O'Connor, MD

Ebiere Okah, MD, MS (alumni)
Madison Okuno, MD
Monica Olivier, MD
Sam Olson, MD
Shelbi Olson, MD
Chidi Onongaya, MD
Nathan Ostlie, MD
Kelsey Parks, MD, IBCLC
Nimra Pasha, MD
Dil Patel, MD, MS
Shraya Patel, MD
Samuel Payne, MD
Marissa Paulson, MD
Austin J Peña, MD
Crina Peterson, MD, PhD
Alana Petrassi, MD
Austin Pickup, MD
Lauren Powell, MD
Kishore Raja, MD
Aarabhi Rajagopal, MD
Rosemary Ramp, MD
Michelle Rayne, MD, PharmD
Supriya Reddy, MD
Thomas Reimann, MD
Luke Remme, MD
Jennifer J Robinson, MD
Aaron Rosenblum, MD
Daniel Rounds, MD
Ross Rybakowicz, MD
Mayada Saadoun, MD
Autefeh Sajjadi, MD
Joshua Samec, MD
Leah Schaaf, DO
Emma Schaffer, MD
Thomas Schmidt, MD, MHS
Sophie Scholtz, MD
Matthew Semler, MD
Alex Sherban, MD

Zoey Shultz, MD
Hayley Severson, MD, MPH
Zachary Shaheen, MD, PhD
Sruthi Shankar, MD
Evelyn Shen, MD
Kara Sherva, MD
Lauren Sikora, MD
Margaret Singer, MD
Justice Spriggs, MD
Paul J. Strain, MD
Laura Stolbrock, MD
Anisa Suleiman, MD
Wendy Sun, MD
Sarah Swenson, MD, DPhil
Samantha Talerico, MD
Tabitha Tate, MD
Blake Tidwell, MD
Jacob Tigner, MD (alumni)
Shiori Tomatsu, MD

Ellen Townley, MD
Tiffany Truong, DO
Christopher G Tucker, MD, PhD
Lisa Qiu, DO
Jennifer Erinma Udeogu, MD
Alysia Jamier Washington, MD
Taylor Wells, MD
Lindsay Welton, MD
Matthew Wheelwright, MD
Amy Whillock, MD, PhD
Brandon Wesche, MD
Rebecca Wiersma, MD
Hannah Wilson, MD, PhD
Alison Woods, MD
Pitchaya Worapongsatitaya, MD
Teekz Yenpasook DO, MS
Victoria Zeyl, MD
Michael K. Zhang, MD
Talhah Zubair, MD
Haley Zweber, MD

Citations:

1. [Jung v. Association of American Medical Colleges](#)
2. [Code 15 U.S. Code § 37b - Confirmation of antitrust status of graduate medical resident matching programs](#)
3. [Physician Education Debt and the Cost to Attend Medical School](#)

April 26, 2024

Minnesota House of Representatives
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd
Ways and Means Committee
Saint Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chair Olson and the Members of the Ways and Means Committee,

As a current employee of the University of Minnesota (UMN) Libraries, I am writing to express my support for Article 6 of HF 5217, which if passed would reform the MN Public Employment Labor Relations Act (PELRA).

The bargaining units currently designated by PELRA lump me, as a Professional & Academic (P&A) employee in Unit 11, together with thousands of UMN employees whose jobs have little in common with my own. For example, as a faculty-like staff librarian with continuous appointment status, I care deeply about workplace issues that are not as relevant to other P&A staff, like academic freedom and protection of research time. The enormity and heterogeneity of the current bargaining units serve to, in practice, deny collective bargaining rights to UMN workers.

The UMN Libraries and our staff are essential to our campus, students, faculty, and the community. We steward millions of dollars worth of books, articles, archives and other rare materials; we oversee large library spaces humming with activity; we support the research mission of the University in countless ways; and much more. The ability to come together with a meaningful focus on the library workplace will lead to a stronger library, to the ultimate benefit of students, faculty, staff, and the public.

Thank you for your consideration,



Danya Leebaw
Associate Librarian, University of Minnesota Libraries

April 24th, 2024

Minnesota House of Representatives
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd
Ways and Means Committee
Saint Paul, MN 55155

Chair Liz Olson and the Ways and Means Committee:

I am writing as an eleven year employee of the University of Minnesota to voice my support for Article 6 of HF 5217, to reform the MN Public Employee Labor Relations Act (PELRA). Passing this law would restore access to common sense employment units for thousands of University of Minnesota employees, and allow them to collectively bargain, should they so choose.

Under PELRA's current construction, over 6000 University employees are forced into a single bargaining unit (Unit 11 - P&A) with little shared commonalities in our work. This employment group has ballooned from 6% to over 25% of all University employees since its creation in 1980. As it stands, employees doing similar work are barred from organizing with one another, but must organize along the arbitrary lines of their employment group -- adjunct faculty seeking a voice on campus cannot organize with their tenure track colleagues, but instead must organize with accountants and athletic trainers, and they must do so across all 5 campuses.

The University of Minnesota administration has been well aware of the bargaining limitations currently imposed under PELRA for years, and they have made no movement to address the situation. Quite the opposite in fact, as the administration spent over \$500,000 opposing a 2016 unionization effort on the basis that PELRA prohibited P&A and tenure-track faculty from organizing together. In the 8 years since that effort they have not, to my knowledge, made any attempts to begin conversations aimed at reform of PELRA. It is only now that staff, faculty, and students have organized to directly appeal to the legislature that they claim to be open to a change, but only on their terms.

I urge you to pass this bill and listen directly to the students, staff, and faculty who seek a voice at the table in their workplace. Far from a radical change to labor law, Article 6 of HF 5217 will align the University of Minnesota with other workplaces, public and private, in allowing workers to form unions consistent with their job duties and location.

Sincerely,

Ian M Ringgenberg
P&A Employee at the University of Minnesota

April 25, 2024

Minnesota House of Representatives
Minnesota State Capitol
75 Rev Dr Martin Luther King Jr Boulevard,
Ways and Means Committee
Saint Paul, MN 55155

Chair Liz Olson and the Ways and Means Committee:

I speak as a graduate fellow in favor of Article 6 of HF 5217. I am a third year PhD Candidate in the department of Biomedical Engineering at the University of Minnesota. At the University of Minnesota, Graduate Assistants are represented by UMN GLU, Local 1105 of the United Electrical, Radio, and Machine Workers.

When I was admitted to the PhD program I was given a 3 year College of Science and Engineering fellowship offered to incoming students from underrepresented backgrounds who have outstanding qualifications. During the academic year I am paid through this fellowship funding. Over the summer I was paid through my lab as a research assistant.

Under the current PELRA statute, my work during the summer as a research assistant is considered a bargaining unit position represented by my union, GLU-UE Local 1105. However, my fellowship position over the academic year is not even considered by the university nor the law to be employment at all.

During summer months while I am funded as a research assistant, I work on the development of polymeric biomaterials that can deliver medicines to biological systems. My duties include polymer synthesis and characterization, equipment upkeep, waste disposal, management of harsh organic solvents, training new lab members, and supply ordering and restocking. It is innovative work that I am proud to be a part of.

During the academic year when I am funded through fellowship, I go into work every day in the same lab, with the same supervisor, conducting the exact same work duties. The only difference is that the university and PELRA do not consider this to be employment in any way. I am outside of the bargaining unit and do not have access to hard fought protections gained by our union. I lack recognized access to our grievance procedure. I can be made to take unpaid work related training. There is little recourse if I am told to work far above 40 hours per week.

Thousands of other graduate workers are in the same position that I am. We conduct research, teaching, service, and administrative responsibilities much the same as other graduate assistants, but because of a technicality in PELRA, we lack collective bargaining rights. Article 6 of HF 5217 would rectify this by explicitly recognizing fellows for what we are: graduate student workers employed by the university to further its research, teaching, and service

mission. I ask you to join graduate assistants, undergraduate workers, staff, faculty, and unions across the state in supporting the passage of this bill.

Thank you for your consideration,

Sandra Shahriar
Graduate Fellow/PhD Candidate, University of Minnesota

April 25th, 2024

Chair Olson and Members of the House Ways and Means Committee,

As a Political Science lecturer and former graduate student at the University of Minnesota, I am writing to ask for your support for Article 8 (University of Minnesota Collective Bargaining) of SF 5266 and the much needed amendments it makes to the Public Employment Labor Relations Act (PELRA).

Lecturers and other ‘gig professors’¹ at the U of M teach despite inadequate working conditions that also negatively affect our students’ learning². If I were an instructor at a different institution--or a public or private employee almost anywhere else in the US--I would be able to talk to my co-workers facing similar conditions and attempt to form a union. However, this isn’t possible because of PELRA’s rare and perplexing system of mandatory bargaining units. Due to those units, I would need to organize thousands of employees whose jobs look nothing like mine and who may work on the other side of the state.

An IT specialist can’t understand the difficulty of teaching sensitive subjects without academic freedom protections. Marketing employees from Crookston don’t have to fight for library access prior to the term to make their syllabi. Advancement officers from Morris don’t get dropped after each semester ends. Administrative specialists at Rochester don’t have their pay fluctuate with the number of courses available. Conversely, I don’t have much in common with the working conditions of these employees. Yet PELRA forces us into the same bargaining unit.

The current PELRA system is a radical outlier in private and public sector labor relations. This bill would return us to normalcy by aligning PELRA with widely accepted practices in both the private and public sectors, as well as in higher education institutions across the country.

University of Minnesota workers deserve the same union rights as other public employees. I urge you to stand with us and support these proposed amendments to PELRA. Thank you for your attention to this critical matter.

Sincerely,

Dr. Tracey Blasenheim
Political Science Lecturer
University of Minnesota

¹ “Your Professor May Be a Gig Worker”

<https://mndaily.com/274370/opinion/opinion-your-professor-may-be-a-gig-worker/>

² “Revising the adjunct faculty system: The adjunct system is hurting students and faculty alike.”

<https://mndaily.com/281699/opinion/opinion-revising-the-adjunct-faculty-system/>

April 19th, 2024

Minnesota House
Room 479 State Office Building
House Ways and Means Committee
Saint Paul, MN 55155

Chair Liz Olson and the Ways and Means Committee,

I am writing today as a training physician and scientist at the University of Minnesota (UMN) to express my support for Article 6 of HF5217, which if passed would reform the MN Public Employment Labor Relations Act (PELRA).

Our UMN is home to approximately ~1,000 resident and fellow physicians every year. All of us residents and fellows have terminal degrees. We are doctors and are training to be specialists (called residents), many of whom go on to pursue additional subspecialty training (called fellows - like myself).

I am in the final year of my training as a Pediatric Rheumatologist. I have both an MD and PhD degree, and as a physician-scientist, I am currently developing both my long term clinical and research program. I am in my 15th year of explicit training after college, which reflects the staggering amount of time we physicians need to devote in order to be fully trained professionals in our respective fields.

I would like to highlight two important points:

First, we residents and fellows provide direct patient care in clinics and hospitals of almost every major health center in the metro area, and we lead public health and research efforts with the singular goal of making Minnesota a healthier place to live. We are privileged to serve our Minnesota community and are proud to further our UMN's mission.

Second, we are employees that lack the ability to negotiate our salaries. We sometimes work up to 70-80 hours a week but lack control over our schedules. We are faced with incredibly difficult personal decisions such as deciding whether to defer starting a family or commit to having an unsustainable work-life balance.

Our goal is not to highlight specific grievances or desired work protections. We simply request the ability to collectively bargain, which is currently unobtainable for us. The current bargaining units delineated by our state statutes do not lend a voice to our unique needs as training physicians.

Over 20% of residents and fellows have already signed our written testimony, also provided to you as a separate letter. In this context, we humbly ask all of you to provide us the tools so that we may better advocate for ourselves.

Support the future of Minnesota medicine. Please support Article 6 of HF5217.

Thank you for your time, consideration, and ongoing work to build a better Minnesota community -

Zachary Shaheen, MD/PhD
Pediatric Rheumatology Fellow, PGY-6, University of Minnesota
Medical College of Wisconsin '18
College of St. Benedict / St. John's University '09

April 18, 2024

House Ways and Means Committee

Chair Olson and Members of the Ways and Means Committee,

I am an undergraduate student worker on the University of Minnesota Twin Cities campus, specifically with the Office of the Registrar. I am also a student who receives federal financial aid and work-study funds. My rights as a student worker are extremely limited due to the current PELRA legislation that is in place. I highly support Article 6 (University of Minnesota Collective Bargaining) of HF 5217 in modifying the current public employee definition to allow all undergraduate students to join and form common sense unions.

As a student who is disallowed from joining and participating in bargaining due to my financial need to attend college, my rights to collective bargaining are denied. I am unable to join my full-time non-student coworkers and supervisors in the clerical workers' union who represent us and provide benefits that we are unable to receive. This is the case for a large majority of undergraduate students at the University of Minnesota due to the current, unmodified legislation in place. Article 6 of SF 5217 would allow for us to regain the rights we do not currently have. No student should have less rights than any other student due to financial need for aid.

Undergraduate student workers are essential to all University of Minnesota campuses, and we should be able to advocate for ourselves within the unions that represent our various positions across the state. We deserve the same rights and opportunities as any staff at the University who are included under PELRA. The changes we ask for within Article 6 of SF 5217 are not radical, and place the University in line with widely accepted norms for unionization in the public and private sectors. We all are public employees, no matter if we receive federal aid or work study, no matter our position or what campus we attend.

Please consider passing this bill with all proposed modifications. The benefits that undergraduate students receive from common unions, as well as returning our right to collective bargaining, will provide student workers with the protections we have been excluded from.

Thank you.

Ash Smith, UMN Undergrad Student Worker
Minneapolis, MN

April 22, 2024

To Chair Olson and the House Ways and Means Committee,

My name is Ian Moore and I am a librarian at the University of Minnesota Duluth. I am writing to testify in support of Article 6 of HF 5217, which amends the Public Employee Labor Relations Act.

The Public Employee Labor Relations Act prevents professional employees like myself and my colleagues from organizing to advocate for ourselves in the University of Minnesota system. In particular, pay for professional and administrative employees has lagged far behind the rising cost of living and the university has done little to address it. Stagnating pay leaves many staff demoralized and unable to live comfortably in the communities we are so proud to be a part of as employees of the University of Minnesota system. Again and again, I have seen talented colleagues who are passionate about the work they do at the University of Minnesota leave for work because the university is unwilling to compensate professional staff fairly. Our libraries in particular are uncompetitive with their peers in the region, making it difficult for us to recruit and retain new employees. Turnover, our difficulties in hiring, and stagnating wages have negative effects not only on our staff, but also on the students, faculty, and communities we serve.

I believe that amending the Public Employee Labor Relations Act will enable staff and faculty at the University of Minnesota to effectively advocate for themselves and for their communities. U of M workers, like other public employees, should have the right to join and form the unions that work for them.

Thank you to everyone on the committee for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Ian Moore

Business & Economics Librarian at the University of Minnesota Duluth