

# When Campus Workers Have a Voice, Students Succeed

Why Virginia should include higher education employees in collective bargaining rights

Students benefit when professors, advisors, custodians, and maintenance workers have a voice on the job. Advising, office hours, clean buildings, and stable schedules rely on campus staff. Many workers lack a protected way to address issues before students feel the impacts.

Collective bargaining helps retain staff and keep campuses functioning — but the House proposal currently excludes most higher education workers.

## How Campus Operations Shape the Student Experience

When jobs are unstable, staff face economic strain and students feel the effects.

<b>What students experience</b>	<b>What causes it</b>	<b>What bargaining changes</b>
Advisor appointments delayed	High turnover & workload	Retention and staffing stability
Maintenance requests are delayed	Short staffing or conflicting schedules	Better hiring & scheduling input
Incomplete syllabus at start of semester	Last-minute course assignments	Advance scheduling standards
Limited mentoring time	Instructor juggling multiple jobs	More focus on teaching & research

These examples follow that pattern:

### Academic Counselor

Needs clearer coordination and information systems to support students effectively

**Bargaining could provide:** ability to negotiate workflow improvements that help students succeed

### Custodian

Shift assignments sometimes change, ending after public transit stops running

**Bargaining could provide:** fairer pay, standard scheduling practices, and predictable shifts

### Graduate Teaching Assistant

Low stipend leads to skipping lunch and trouble focusing while teaching and conducting research

**Bargaining could provide:** manageable workloads and higher pay that supports basic living costs

### Adjunct Faculty

Receives course schedule shortly before semester; relies on second job

**Bargaining could provide:** advance notice, paid office hours, speaker budgets, less need for second job

### Assistant Professor

Self-censors course content and research due to fears of political retribution

**Bargaining could provide:** confidence from union protections, support and guidance when funding shifts

### About Tuition

*Tuition has risen far faster than employee pay — nearly 40% vs. 17% over two decades (inflation-adjusted).*

*Tuition trends reflect state funding levels more than employee pay.*

## Consistency in Policy, Consistency on Campus

Excluding campus and hospital workers — who make up a majority of executive-branch employees — leaves the policy incomplete. When jobs are unstable, workers face economic strain and campus services become less predictable for students. Including campus workers supports reliable operations for students and families.

Campuses work best when the people who run them can speak up.

**Include campus workers in collective bargaining rights.**

