



February 13, 2018

Resolution 2017-2018-19: Resolution Supporting Georgetown Graduate Workers' Right to Form a Union

WHEREAS, graduate workers are valued members of the Georgetown University community whose labor as teaching assistants, teaching associates, and research assistants has a lasting effect on the intellectual growth of students during their time at Georgetown;

WHEREAS, graduate workers have the right to living and working conditions that reflect Georgetown University's commitment to the Jesuit values of promoting *cura personalis* and offering dignified work;

WHEREAS, graduate workers are vulnerable members of the Georgetown University community because they currently do not have any formal input regarding their hours, wages and benefits, and working conditions, which include:

- Pay that does not meet the standard for a living wage within the District of Columbia, with stipends of \$28,000 to \$30,000 annually in one of the most expensive cities in the country,¹
- Healthcare with an out-of-pocket maximum of \$6,350 per year and no coverage for many fundamental healthcare needs including vision and dental,² and
- Large unilateral increases in weekly hour requirements, without corresponding salary increases;³

WHEREAS, forming a union would give graduate workers power to improve their wages, benefits, working conditions, and other work-related issues.

WHEREAS, the Georgetown Alliance of Graduate Employees (GAGE) has formed an organizing committee, affiliated with an international union (the American Federation of Teachers), and gained majority membership of graduate workers, who have shown support for unionization by signing mission statements, authorization cards, and membership cards that designate the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) as their bargaining agent;

¹ See GAGE, Living Wages, <http://www.wearegage.org/living-wages/>.

² See GAGE, Health Care, <http://www.wearegage.org/health-care/>.

³ See Jake Maher, *Dialogue Between Doctoral Students and Administration Grows as Petition Circulates*, GEORGETOWN VOICE (Apr. 21, 2016), <http://georgetown-voice.com/2016/04/21/82128/>; GAGE, Living Wages, <http://www.wearegage.org/living-wages/>.

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WHEREAS, in order to align its employment policies with its Catholic and Jesuit values, Georgetown University adopted a Just Employment Policy, which states that employees “have the right to freely associate and organize, and that the University will respect the rights of employees to vote for or against union representation without intimidation, unjust pressure, undue delay or hindrance in accordance with applicable law”;⁴

WHEREAS, Pope Francis and the Catholic Church support labor unions and the rights of all workers to freely associate in pursuit of a better world;⁵

WHEREAS, the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) ruled in August 2016 that graduate workers who work as teaching assistants, teaching associates, and research assistants at private universities have the legal right to unionize for the purpose of collective bargaining;⁶

WHEREAS, despite the Georgetown administration’s commendable assurances made to GAGE on 1 February 2018 of a desire to come to terms on a private election agreement, the university administration’s continued public stance of not recognizing its graduate student employees’ right to form a union is antithetical to existing NLRB guidelines, the moral teachings of the Catholic Church, and the University’s own employment policy;

WHEREAS, the members of GAGE have had over a thousand conversations with graduate workers about forming a union to better their living and working conditions;

WHEREAS, the Georgetown University Student Association and GradGov have passed resolutions in support of the right of graduate workers at Georgetown University to decide for themselves whether to form a union by holding an election, without delay or obstruction;⁷

⁴ See GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY, *Just Employment Policy for Georgetown University*, <https://publicaffairs.georgetown.edu/acbp/just-employment-policy.html>.

⁵ See, e.g., UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS, *Brief of Amicus Curiae United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Supporting Respondents, in Janus v. AFSCME Council 31*, Supreme Court Docket No. 16-1466 (2018).

⁶ See *Columbia University*, 364 NLRB No. 90 (2016).

⁷ See GAGE, Support & Solidarity, <https://www.wearegage.org/solidarity-statements/>.

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WHEREAS, over 50 members of Georgetown University's faculty have signed a letter of support⁸ and the History Department⁹ has passed a resolution urging Georgetown to allow graduate assistants to decide for themselves whether they should unionize;

WHEREAS, members of the Student Bar Association are studying towards a Masters or Ph.D. alongside their J.D. in a joint degree program, and have therefore been denied the right to form a union;¹⁰ and

WHEREAS, Georgetown Law's motto is "Law is but the means, justice is the end";

THEREFORE; be it resolved that:

- 1) The Student Bar Association stands in solidarity with graduate student workers at Georgetown University seeking to form a union with their coworkers; and
- 2) The Student Bar Association urges the Georgetown University administration to follow through on its commitment to signing a private election agreement without further delay and to recognize any graduate student union with majority support in a bargaining unit.

Respectfully submitted,

Ata Akiner
Evening Vice President

Courtney Wilkes
3L Delegate

Samantha Malone
2L Delegate

Tyrone Pinkins
1L §3 Delegate

⁸ See GAGE, Faculty Letter in Support of GAGE, https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1E4K7QnQ7jMk-3IOc-TaRvmYzose4P7qo1x8RPtJ0Kd9c/viewform?edit_requested=true.

⁹ See GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY, History Department Resolution on the Matter of Graduate Assistant Unionization, <https://history.georgetown.edu/History%20Department%20Resolution%20on%20the%20Matter%20of%20Graduate%20Assistant%20Unionization>.

¹⁰ See GEORGETOWN LAW, *Joint Degree Programs*, <https://www.law.georgetown.edu/admissions-financial-aid/jd-admissions/joint-degree-programs/index.cfm>.