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**Subject:** Request to Bargain

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### To University of Massachusetts Administration:

We, the graduate workers of UMass Amherst, united as the Graduate Employee Organization, UAW Local 2322, formally submit this request on Tuesday, June 20th, to open negotiations with the University on our successor employment contract that will take effect in September 2023.

The union and the administration have a common goal: for UMass Amherst to thrive as a world-class institution. The best practice to achieve that goal is to offer a competitive employment package that attracts and recruits high-caliber graduate students, both domestically and internationally. Of course, the University wants its workers to live with dignity and be able to reside in the vicinity of the workplace. As hard workers, we want to spend our time achieving educational and intellectual outcomes for the University as opposed to balancing housing costs and other living expenses. A competitive contract demonstrates the University's respect for graduate workers as an integral part of its world class standing.

The reality of the situation at UMass Amherst is that graduate workers are struggling. The vast majority of us are rent-burdened and the housing market in the town of Amherst has become prohibitively expensive. We see this as an issue that requires creative solutions. As inflation continues to soar, we are overburdened with student fees, living expenses, and even food insecurity. In further regard to our wellness, the University has not contributed to the Health & Welfare Trust Fund in 6 years, which cannot be delayed any further. In addition to these economic and wellness issues, we are in urgent need of protections from overwork and from harassment in the workplace. These problems are among our most pressing, and we look forward to good faith negotiations at the bargaining table to solve them.

We are ecstatic to enter contract negotiations during an historic time for the labor movement. As GEO undergoes negotiations, we look forward to support for our parent union. Within the UAW, higher education has been declared as a primary sector of the UAW and has been included in our constitution – as it is the fastest growing sector in the union. Our newly, democratically elected UAW International Executive Board is committed to aggressive and militant bargaining. Our newly, democratically elected Region 9A Director, Brandon Mancilla, understands the struggles of graduate workers first-hand, and is committed to progressive changes.

Graduate workers do the research, write the papers, submit the grants, and teach the classes that allow the University to accumulate wealth and prestige. Put simply, UMass works because we do. We're all in this together: a win for us is a win for you. A fair contract that meets our needs will allow us to continue to do our very important work that keeps this university running.

We look forward to working with the administration and those who have the power to make decisions on behalf of the University, including those who are new and bring fresh perspectives. We invite you, in your capacity as a decision-maker at UMass Amherst, to join us at the bargaining table yourself, in the same way that we invite all GEO members to attend bargaining sessions. We are committed to an open, transparent, and truly democratic process of negotiations. We hope you share our commitment and will join us to help make this vision a reality.

**Best regards,  
Graduate Employee Organization**

