

Ted Johnson – NGSW-UAW

Good morning Madam Chair and members of the committee. My name is Ted Johnson [T-E-D J-O-H-N-S-O-N] and I am a Graduate Assistant at UNLV and part of our union, Nevada Graduate Student Workers-UAW. I'm here supporting AB 191.

Over the past year, I have spoken to hundreds of Graduate Assistants about their experiences working at UNLV and their reasons for wanting to form a union and secure a collective bargaining agreement. Today I want to share a brief story on behalf of one of those people, who could not be here.

Marzieh Taheri, a Graduate Assistant working at UNLV, was coerced to work 6-7 days a week in a lab with hazardous conditions. When she tried to remove herself from exposure to harmful chemicals and dust by working on data analysis outside the lab, her supervisor threatened to end her job. He berated her and her coworkers for not working fast enough, despite the long hours they were putting into the job. Eight months of working under extreme stress caused her to break out in a rash on her neck and body. This rash only went away once she was finally able to secure a new job in a different department, away from her former supervisor. For eight months, Marzieh was afraid to report her situation to title IX or ombuds because she was terrified of losing her only source of income and having her career irreparably damaged. She had not heard positive outcomes from others who sought remedies to abuse through university controlled-processes.

Marzieh is just one of the many people I spoke with who suffered physical, emotional, and professional consequences of not having a trustworthy, independent process for addressing workplace issues, such as those that exist for unionized Graduate Assistants at public universities in our neighboring states.

This is just one of the reasons that I joined with over 1,500 colleagues to form a union and address the imbalance of power at the root cause of workplace bullying and harassment. I urge you to pass AB 191 to ensure that NSHE respects its employees' choice to unionize and create a better university.