

Rep. Gene Pelowski
491 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chair Pelowski and members of the House Higher Education Committee:

My name is Greg Carlson. I am an alum of the University of Minnesota and a former High School Chemistry teacher. My first teaching position was in the small western Minnesota town of Browns Valley. It was there I first had the privilege of interacting with and instructing Native American students. It was also in Browns Valley that I began to grasp the higher education attainment gap that exists for Native American students.

I was excited to learn about the "Minnesota American Indian Scholars Program" as proposed by Governor Walz and Lieutenant Governor Flanagan and as presented to the House Higher Education Committee by OHE Commissioner Dennis Olson. This proposed Program was also presented to the MIAC on February 28, 2023, by Commissioner Olson and was met with much enthusiasm by Tribal leaders. As you know, this proposal has been incorporated into HF2073, which I support wholeheartedly. Still, there are two areas that, if incorporated into HF2073, I believe would make an even greater impact. The first is to expand the eligibility from Tribal member to Tribal member or lineal descendant. The second is to include a subsidy for Room and Board in the list of approved funding disbursements. Please see the following:

The first is Article 2, Section 1, Subdivision 2.2 Lines 22.1 to 22.4 as follows [in RED]:

(2) be either (i) a Minnesota resident for resident tuition purposes who is an enrolled member or citizen of a federally recognized American Indian Tribe or Canadian First Nation, **or a direct descendant of a parent or grandparent who is an enrolled member of a federally recognized American Indian tribe, or Canadian First Nation** or (ii) an enrolled member or citizen of a Minnesota Tribal Nation, **or a direct descendant of a parent or grandparent who is an enrolled member of a Minnesota Tribal Nation** regardless of resident tuition status; and

Rationale: The purpose for this change is to open Program eligibility to a broader population of Native American students. A significant number of Minnesota American Indians do not hold official Tribal membership for a number of reasons.

The second is found in Article 2, Section 1, Subdivision 3, Lines 22.8 to 22.13 as follows [in RED]"

Minnesota State Colleges and Universities must and the University of Minnesota is requested to provide a full tuition and fee waiver to a student eligible under subdivision 2. Funds appropriated with reference to this section may be used to offset the institutional costs of the waivers; fund existing waivers, scholarships, or grant programs, **or to subsidize student housing and meal plans** for students eligible under subdivision 2; provide student supports for eligible students; and administer these programs.

Rationale: The purpose of this change is to make Higher Education possible for those Indigenous families that need it most.

Respectfully,

Greg Carlson