



Madam Chair and Members of the House HEFP Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony and the chance to share about the Minnesota State Grant and college affordability in Minnesota. The Minnesota TRIO Association would like to offer its strong support for [H.F. No. 1517](#) and the proposed adjustments to the Minnesota State Grant program.

Federal TRIO programs are a series of federally funded college-access initiatives, created to remove education barriers for low-income students, students who will be the first in their family to receive a college degree, and students who have a documented disability. TRIO programs provide academic tutoring, personal counseling, mentoring, financial guidance, and other supports necessary for educational access and retention. Programs serve students from middle-school to the university level and veterans navigating the higher education system. Since 1966, TRIO programs have worked to reduce education disparities in Minnesota and TRIO has since grown to serving over 16,000 students at 32 post-secondary institutions across our state. This includes TRIO programs based out of the University of Minnesota campuses, private non-profit institutions, and the two- and four-year campuses of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system. Because of TRIO's federally defined eligibility criteria, the vast majority of TRIO students in Minnesota are, or will be, State Grant recipients.

As a college access program that works with low-income and first-generation college students, we can attest that the Minnesota State Grant is essential for making higher education accessible in our state. Whether students are pursuing a bachelor's degree in teaching or an associate degree in automotive services, career and education pathways would be unattainable for thousands of Minnesotans without the support of the Minnesota State Grant program. It is also true, however, that because of the current statutory maximum for combined state and federal aid, the pursuit of education remains inaccessible for many low-income Minnesotans. Our TRIO advisors have worked with students who were successful in their programs but who were forced to drop out of their colleges because of fees as small as \$100. Our advisors have also served students who, if it were not for grants from one-time emergency funds at their institutions, would have had no choice but to discontinue their studies. Although reducing the minimum student responsibility share from 50% to 47% seems like a small change per student, this adjustment translates to vital support for those students who could benefit the most. According to data from the Office of Higher Education and the Minnesota Private College Council, the lowest-income students would see a State Grant increase of \$500 to \$770. This singular change would make a consequential difference for those TRIO students and TRIO-eligible students who have faced difficult decisions about whether or not to remain enrolled in school. It would address retention barriers for students who have been forced to decide between paying a required college fee or for childcare and putting food on the table.

Although TRIO has continually supported underrepresented students in their pursuit of a college degree, real barriers to college affordability remain. On behalf of TRIO programs in the State of Minnesota, the Minnesota TRIO Association lends its strong support to [H.F. No. 1517](#) and its expansion of the Minnesota State Grant for the students we serve every day.

Thank you for your consideration,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael F. Bro". The signature is stylized and cursive.

Michael F. Bro – MNTRIO President
The Minnesota TRIO Association Board
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