



Dear Members of the Omnibus Higher Ed Finance Conference Committee,

On behalf of the Minnesota Association of Professional Employees (MAPE), a union of over 15,000 state workers across all state agencies, boards, and commissions, we would like to thank the members for the opportunity to testify and their work thus far in assembling S.F 975, the Omnibus Higher Education Policy and Finance bill.

We appreciate the continued funding in both the House and Senate of the ISRS Next Generation system. The \$16 million appropriated for both FY 22-23 and FY 24-25 will allow Minnesota State to continue building out the upgraded record system. We also appreciate the House's investment in the operating adjustments for both Minnesota State and the Office of Higher Education, which will allow campuses to maintain the dedicated staff and high-quality programming students come to expect from state's colleges and universities. Despite the Senate's increase to the base appropriation to Central Office and Shared Services for Minnesota State, the severe underfunding to the Operations and Maintenance will force layoffs and close numerous programs and courses. While we understand using Minnesota's surplus judiciously, we ask the Senate to adopt the position of the House and maintain our current staffing and programming. We have similar concerns for the Office of Higher Education, where the Senate fails to provide any operating adjustment in an already lean operation.

Lastly, MAPE is concerned with the approach both the House and Senate take in addressing tuition rates at Minnesota State. The House proposal for an unpaid for tuition freeze would put a significant strain on an already financially stressed institution due to the pandemic, particularly in the next biennium. Without knowing for what purposes the federal assistance from the America Rescue Plan can be used, this could cause even more layoffs than what campuses are experiencing. The Senate proposal to cut tuition by 5 percent below the 2019-2020 academic year rates and freezing other fees without increasing revenue in any other funding will have a devastating effect on campuses across the state, costing the system tens of millions in revenue.

We thank you again for the opportunity to testify, and we hope that the final version of this bill provides and adequate investment in the affordable, high-quality education provided by our state colleges and universities.