

February 27, 2023

The Honorable Tim Walz
Governor, State of Minnesota
130 State Capitol
75 Rev Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Governor Walz:

On behalf of The Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice (“The Hope Center”) at Temple University, I would like to express our strong support for the **Minnesota Student Parent Support Initiative**. The State Legislature should approve and fully fund this timely and urgently needed program.

Nationally, more than one-in-five undergraduate and nearly one-in-three graduate students are parenting a dependent child while enrolled in classes.¹ Parenting students earn grades comparable to non-parenting students but complete college at much lower rates, reflecting non-academic challenges that often undermine student success.² In the most recent Hope Center student basic needs survey, seven out of ten parenting students reported experiencing food or housing insecurity—a rate that is 15 percentage points higher than non-parenting students.³ During the COVID-19 pandemic, almost half of all parenting students missed at least three or more classes in the last semester because they lacked adequate child care.

We applaud your proposal for a Minnesota Student Parent Support Initiative, which will provide critical support to pregnant and parenting students. The program will fund grants to create or expand campus-based child care and increase access to community-based providers at a time when many students struggle to afford these services.

Providing state funding to address the shortage of child care for parenting students will help more students complete a degree or credential and enter the workforce at a time when federal resources are woefully insufficient. In Minnesota, just 13 percent of federal Child Care Development Fund resources support parents enrolled in education and training activities.⁴ Without federal support, colleges have found on-campus child care challenging to sustain. The number of child care centers at public colleges has declined in recent decades.⁵ The proposed

¹ Author calculations from U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Postsecondary Student Aid Study: 2016.

² Anderson, A. & Green, A (December 2022). [Roadmap for change to support pregnant and parenting students](#). Urban Institute.

³ The Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice. (2021, March). [#RealCollege 2021: Basic needs security during the ongoing pandemic](#).

⁴ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2022, May). [FY 2020 Preliminary Data Table 10 - Reasons for Receiving Care, Average Monthly Percentage of Families](#).

⁵ The Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice. ((2023, February). [Congress Needs to Address the Child Care Crisis for Parenting Students. Here's How](#).

state child care funding under this is an essential first step in stabilizing the financial model for child care delivery to parenting students.

The proposed initiative also allows institutions to provide a range of essential services and basic needs to students, including mental and physical health care, well-child visits, child development activities, parenting student support groups, academic advising, and emergency funds. Allowing institutions to tailor services to their students' needs will further Minnesota's goals to improve student success while offering institutions the flexibility to use state funding effectively.

Finally, the proposed initiative emerges from collaborative planning between the Minnesota Office of Higher Education and other state agencies, institutions, and stakeholders. Ensuring the basic needs security of all students in higher education requires collaboration across government and between public and private sectors, especially for pregnant and parenting students who must navigate multiple services.

The Minnesota Student Parent Support Initiative represents a significant step forward in addressing the needs of students whose daily struggles are rarely appreciated. Supporting pregnant and parenting students and their children is a wise and timely investment in student success and economic growth. The Hope Center is proud to offer our enthusiastic endorsement.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Anne E. Lundquist". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped initial "A".

Dr. Anne E. Lundquist
Director and Assistant Professor
The Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice