



Senator Omar Fateh  
Minnesota Senate Bldg.,  
Room 3219  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Representative Marion Rarick  
2nd Floor Centennial Office Bldg.  
658 Cedar Street  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Representative Dan Wolgamott  
5th Floor Centennial Office Bldg.  
658 Cedar Street  
St. Paul, MN 55155

May 7, 2025

Dear Conference Committee Members,

We, the undersigned advocates for student parents in Minnesota, are writing to express our deep concern regarding the potential cuts and elimination of the Student Parent Support Initiative (SPSI) included in the House Higher Education Omnibus bill. **Minnesota's colleges and universities are home to 72,978 undergraduate parents, representing 23 percent of the total student body. Of these, a notable 30,626 are single mothers.**<sup>1</sup> This critical program plays a vital role in empowering student parents to overcome barriers and earn their degree, ultimately benefiting their families and our state.

Administered by the Office of Higher Education in partnership with the Minnesota Department of Health, SPSI provides competitive grants to institutions and organizations that support student parents. SPSI addresses the unique challenges these students face, such as time and financial constraints, lack of childcare resources, and academic hurdles, through case management, childcare assistance, and help with basic needs. By doing so, SPSI enables student parents to remain enrolled, graduate, and secure a brighter future for themselves and their children.

### **Investing in Student Parents is a Two-Generation Solution**

Supporting student parents not only helps them; it benefits their children and our broader

---

<sup>1</sup> Center for Equity in Higher Education (2020, August 1). *Investing in Single Mothers' Higher Education in Minnesota: Costs and Benefits to Individuals, Families, and Society*. Institute for Women's Policy Research. Retrieved April 25, 2025, from <https://iwpr.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Minnesota.pdf>

society. Children of degree-earning parents have greater housing stability, improved nutrition, and better access to early education. Additionally, these children grow up witnessing the life-changing power of education, creating a cycle of opportunity and progress. Research confirms the strong correlation between a parent's education level and a child's success.<sup>2</sup> With one in five college students in Minnesota being a parent, the need for SPSI is clear and urgent.

The majority of student parents are women, many of whom are low-income and the sole heads of household. Nationally, the numbers are stark—just 8% of single mothers earn a degree within six years, compared to nearly 50% of their peers without children.<sup>3</sup> SPSI offers targeted support to change these outcomes, unlocking the potential of a critical segment of Minnesota's future workforce.

### Key Strategies and Benefits of SPSI

SPSI drives student-parent retention and graduation through initiatives such as:

- One-on-one case management services to help parents navigate the complexities of college life.
- Access to safe and reliable childcare options.
- Convenient access to health services for parents and their children.
- Emergency grants and referrals for basic needs support.
- Cultivating a culture of belonging for student parents and their families on campus.
- Collecting essential data about the state's student-parent population to improve services and strategies.

These efforts create sustainable pathways to success for student parents, which, in turn, strengthens our workforce, enhances economic stability, and reduces reliance on public assistance programs. Eliminating SPSI funding not only jeopardizes the well-being of individual student-parent families but also threatens Minnesota's future economic stability, as projections indicate that approximately 74% of jobs will demand some form of postsecondary education by 2031.<sup>4</sup>

### A Clear Choice: Invest in Student Parents, Invest in Minnesota's Future

We recognize the complexities inherent in budget allocation. However, the data is unequivocal: fully funding the Student Parent Support Initiative (SPSI) is not simply an expenditure—it is a high-yield investment in Minnesota's future. Consider the profound impact on single mothers alone: those who earn an Associate of Arts degree are **48 percent less likely to live in poverty**, experience a staggering **\$295,522 increase in lifetime earnings**, save Minnesota an

---

<sup>2</sup> Topor DR, Keane SP, Shelton TL, Calkins SD. Parent involvement and student academic performance: a multiple mediational analysis. *J Prev Interv Community*. 2010;38(3):183-97. doi: 10.1080/10852352.2010.486297. PMID: 20603757; PMCID: PMC3020099.

<sup>3</sup> Center for Equity in Higher Education (2020, August 1). *Investing in Single Mothers' Higher Education in Minnesota: Costs and Benefits to Individuals, Families, and Society*. Institute for Women's Policy Research. Retrieved April 25, 2025, from <https://iwpr.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Minnesota.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce (2023, November 26). *After Everything - Projections of Jobs, Education, and Training Requirements through 2031*. Retrieved April 25, 2025, from [https://cew.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/Projections\\_2031-State-Report.pdf](https://cew.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/Projections_2031-State-Report.pdf)

average of **\$21,857 in public assistance**, and contribute an additional **\$82,059 in lifetime tax revenue**.<sup>5</sup>

Failing to prioritize SPSI funding would be a detrimental step backward, jeopardizing the tangible economic and social benefits outlined above. It would compromise the upward trajectory of countless student parents and their children, hindering their potential to contribute fully to our state's prosperity.

We strongly urge the conference committee to align with the Senate's position and restore the full \$6 million in biennial funding to the SPSI and secure the program's future by extending it into the subsequent biennium. By doing so, you are not just supporting individual students; you are strategically investing in a stronger, more equitable, and more prosperous Minnesota.

Thank you for considering this critical investment. We implore you to protect the resources that empower Minnesota's student parents to succeed, generating significant and lasting returns for our entire state.

Sincerely,

Healthy Community Initiative  
Minnesota Prenatal to Three Coalition  
Northfield Community College Collaborative  
North Star Prosperity  
Raise The Barr  
Start Early Funders Coalition  
The Hope Center for Student Basic Needs

cc: Governor Tim Walz  
Commissioner Dennis Olson  
Sen. Putnam  
Sen. Duckworth  
Rep. Robbins  
Rep. Coulter

---

<sup>5</sup> Center for Equity in Higher Education (2020, August 1). *Investing in Single Mothers' Higher Education in Minnesota: Costs and Benefits to Individuals, Families, and Society*. Institute for Women's Policy Research. Retrieved April 25, 2025, from <https://iwpr.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Minnesota.pdf>