



Date of Hearing & Bill Number: March 12, 2026, HF 3411
To: Members of the Higher Education Finance and Policy Committee
From: North STAR Alliance
City of Residence: Statewide organization

The North STAR Alliance (“NSA”) comprises over 30 Minnesota community and faith-based organizations committed to legislation that welcomes and protects all Minnesotans, regardless of immigration status. We support HF 3411, which limits access by federal immigration officers to public and private postsecondary institutions and protects student data. These protections help ensure that all students can pursue higher education safely and strengthen Minnesota’s workforce and economy.

When colleges and universities are perceived as unsafe due to immigration enforcement presence or data sharing, students may skip classes, avoid campus altogether, opt out of enrolling or re-enrolling, and face academic setbacks because of the stress or uncertainty. HF 3411 will protect campuses from heightened immigration enforcement, which allows students to participate in and complete higher education without fear.

Intensified immigration enforcement leads to a decline in enrollment among all groups of students. Declining enrollment creates financial challenges for colleges and universities, which rely on tuition revenue as significant components to create their budgets. International students generate an estimated \$488 million to the state of Minnesota and are a critical source of revenue for postsecondary institutions across the state.¹ When enrollment falls, postsecondary institutions may need to reduce programs or services. This ends up limiting educational opportunities for *all* students.

Federal enforcement actions such as Operation Metro surge have harmed the overall enrollment in universities across Minnesota. “Lower enrollment means less money in college and university budgets; higher education institutions rely on tuition and financial aid payments to keep campuses up and running”.²

¹ Erin Adler, *Minnesota Colleges and Universities Draw 15,000 International Students Who Bring \$488 Million to the State. That Could Now Be at Risk.*, The Star Tribune (May 2025), <https://www.startribune.com/minnesota-colleges-and-universities-draw-15000-international-students-who-bring-488-million-to-the-state-that-could-now-be-at-risk/601363128>

² Erin Adler, *College and University Leaders Say Enrollment, Attendance Suffered Due to Operation Metro Surge*, The Star Tribune (March 2026), <https://www.startribune.com/college-and-university-leaders-say-enrollment-attendance-suffered-due-to-operation-metro-surge/601589269>



Many postsecondary programs—including economically critical fields such as healthcare, manufacturing, and trades—depend on consistent enrollment to remain viable. Minnesota needs workers in these sectors, and education and training programs focused on them play an important role in preparing the workforce. When enrollment declines and programs are eliminated, Minnesota’s capacity to produce skilled workers and address labor shortages is undermined.

Colleges and universities have an ethical and financial interest to ensure every student will succeed. Policies that create safe, supportive, nondiscriminatory campus life are essential in that regard. In addition to managing the impact of physical presence of federal civil immigration enforcement agents, HF 3411 correctly limits disclosure of personal identifying information. In an age when it can take years for families to complete the process of attaining citizenship, students and parents have a right to expect confidentiality of any data related to their citizenship journeys. Minnesota is a state that has always valued education for all, because we know that the investment pays off and the long term benefits of having a skilled and diverse workforce have kept our economy vital and led to a high rate of Fortune 500 companies per capita in our state.

For the foregoing reasons, we urge your support for HF 3411.

Respectfully submitted:

North Star Alliance Leadership Team

- Comunidades Organizando el Poder y la Acción Latina (COPAL)
- Episcopal Church of Minnesota
- Communities Advancing Prosperity for Immigrant (CAPI USA)
- Jewish Community Action (JCA)
- Asylum Coalition for Transition - Twin Cities (ACT-TC)
- Fe y Justicia
- American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU-MN)
- Minnesota Unitarian Universalist Social Justice Alliance (MUUSJA)
- Coalition of Asian American Leaders (CAAL)
- Interfaith Coalition on Immigration (ICOM)

March 11, 2026

Minnesota Higher Ed committee,

Thank you chair and committee for providing this opportunity to share my experience with you all regarding the impact the surge of Federal investigation officers in the Minnesota had on the higher education experience and the employees that help create this experience. I am, Crystal De Kam, a full-time faculty member at Century College working in the counseling department to help students thrive and be successful in their academic goals.

We often talk on campuses about the ambitious, hopeful, and studious energy that comes with the first week of a starting semester. January 12th 2026, the start of spring semester this year came with a far different feeling. The hallways were quiet and in counseling meetings the conversations with students usually about setting up for success were replaced with scrambles to get classes online, looking for resources as students shelter in place, trying to find help to know what “papers” they should carry, and not knowing if they can continue school after this semester. United States citizens, legal residents, and international students had their studies disrupted and that has rippling impacts on their financial aid, career start, and sometimes program placement.

Even as the semester continued problems persisted as I tried to learn where students were safe on campus. I learned quickly that there was no space in our public building, even my counseling office, which I received mixed messages about if that was a private space or a space Federal officers could enter without a warrant. One of the hardest conversations I had was with a student, who wanted to be on campus and wanted to continue, but when they asked me “how can I stay safe if ICE comes on campus” and I didn't have a clear answer. Another is when a student was in desperate need of some emergency basic needs assistance but did not feel safe completing the required paperwork, because of fear that ICE would use it to identify her and stop her studies - a legal international student with no criminal record. All of this fear, stress, and chronic anxiety about federal agents amplified with every daily ICE incident in their communities.

I think it is important to highlight the employee experiences as well, attempting to support students through spring semester of 26. In student support, on top of the usual business of a starting semester, employees were making time for unexpected conversations, advocating for students to be able to study from home, struggling with a food pantry running low on supplies, and having the emergency assistance grant on campus run out of funds at a record pace.

Faculty scrambled to support students in the classroom, because no human can learn when in fear, chronically stressed out, or feeling unsafe where they are. Some faculty adapted in the moment - moving classes not meant to be online, to online. They attempted time and time again to build a community that felt safe for learning but as a colleague said to me “how do I make them feel safe when they are not safe?” Semester continued it was faculty and staff that brought community resources to campus for support but still the fear of a public building with no limits of who could come and go, strained the wellbeing and learning ability of a significant amount of students for spring of 2026. This is why clearer guidelines and restrictions for federal investigation officers is critical to support students moving forward.

Thank you for your time and attention, this manner is important, and I believe we can do better as a state for our higher education students' sense of safety moving forward.

Crystal De Kam, MA, Community College Counselor