

Dear Chair Pelowski and Members of the House Higher Education Committee,

My name is Aaronica Jackson and I would like to tell you my story of being a single-parent student. In 2015 I graduated from MCTC with my associates and didn't think I needed to get my Bachelor's. I was living in a small studio apartment in Loring Park and working for Minneapolis Public Schools which at the time was sufficient for a single person. After my daughter was born in 2017, I realized that we could not survive on an Associate Educator's salary, so I decided to go back to school.

In the Summer of 2018, I enrolled at Metropolitan State University, and it was tough, before I had my child I knew where to go and whom to tap into for help. I could work a split shift or take off part of the day with no pay to get to a tutoring appointment or office hours, but as a single mom working a full-time job by then, I got to campus for classes. All the supportive services were closed.

As a returning graduate student, I would strongly advocate moving forward with the Student Parent Support Initiative because it would provide an opportunity for parenting students like myself across the state of MN to have access to supportive resources like childcare, mental health services, and parenting groups on campus that would alleviate barriers to their education so that they can graduate and earn a sustainable living wage for their families.

Thank you!

Aaronica Jackson