

## Dear Members of the Joint Higher Education Committee,

It has been a pleasure meeting with many of you over the past several weeks and sharing my vision for Regent service. Unfortunately, I could not connect with everyone due to our busy schedules. I regret that I cannot be with you Tuesday evening, as I will be assisting another campus community out of state during your joint session. With that in mind, I'd like to share my vision for service with you again here:

My name is Benjamin (Benjie) Kaplan. For the past decade, I have been dedicated to serving the University of Minnesota community as Executive Director of Minnesota Hillel. In this role, I have worked to create spaces where thousands of students feel supported, connected, and empowered to engage meaningfully in their communities both on and off campus.

Managing a \$1.3 million annual budget and leading a 24-member governing board, I have gained extensive experience in budgeting, strategic planning, fundraising, governance, and leadership development. Over the years, I have also built strong relationships within the University, collaborating with the Office of Equity and Diversity, UMPD, the Interfaith Campus Coalition, and past University presidents Yudof, Kaler, Gabel, and Ettinger.

As I transition from my professional role on campus to a broader national consulting position, I remain deeply committed to the University of Minnesota. I see service as a Regent as an ideal opportunity to apply my leadership and governance expertise to ensure the institution's continued success.

If given the opportunity, I would prioritize the following key areas:

- **Student Success** – Strengthening academic, social, and personal support for students by prioritizing affordability, mental health resources, and campus safety.
- **Stability and Innovation** – Ensuring financial sustainability, fostering long-term strategic planning, and embracing innovative solutions to emerging challenges.
- **Building Community** – Promoting inclusion, collaboration, and a campus culture where all students feel valued and supported.

Additionally, my unique experiences position me to contribute in several critical areas:

- **Campus Safety** – With extensive experience conducting security assessments, securing federal safety grants, and collaborating with law enforcement, I bring firsthand knowledge of the latest strategies to enhance campus security.
- **Diversity and Inclusion** – I have designed and led award-winning programs that foster dialogue and understanding across differences, helping shift communities from confrontation to conversation and cultivating a culture of respect.

- **Student Wellness** – Since 2020, addressing rising mental health challenges has been a top priority for both Hillel and the University. We must expand counseling services, reduce financial stress, and strengthen support systems to ensure all students can thrive.

With a Master's degree in Community Service / Nonprofit Management, more than 20 years of leadership experience, a proven track record of governance, and a deep commitment to service, I am ready to listen, learn, and help guide the University of Minnesota forward. Four generations of my family hold degrees from the University of Minnesota. It would be an honor to serve as Regent and contribute to shaping the future of this esteemed institution for the next generation.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I welcome the opportunity to discuss my candidacy further and appreciate your support.

**Sincerely,**

**Benjie Kaplan**

5th District / At-Large Regent Candidate