

Dear Chair Youakim and Education Finance Committee members,

My name is Samara Pearson, and I'm the policy director at People for PSEO as well as a second year PSEO student at the UMN. From personal experience, having access to meals and reliable transportation is a problem for a lot of students in PSEO. The students eligible for free and reduced-price lunch at their high schools, aren't eligible for the same kind of discount on a college campus. If you're a full time PSEO student, like me, you don't spend any time at your high school, which means you're left with eating on campus, or waiting until you get home to eat. Eating on campus incurs a lot of fees, whether that be from a meal plan or eating at restaurants near campus, simply isn't affordable or sustainable long-term. I believe that not including a meal provision for full-time PSEO students is of great disservice to students who wish to participate in PSEO but are unable to at the expense of their own well-being.

As far as transportation is concerned, I believe that the eligibility for transportation reimbursement shouldn't be limited to students at/ below the poverty line but should instead be expanded to student's that have a demonstrated need for transportation reimbursement, whether that's a stipend or higher reimbursement rate than the current standard.

I believe this way, students in the state of Minnesota are equitably able to set themselves up for success and access higher education, regardless of their income. I appreciate your consideration, and your advocacy on behalf of all students in Minnesota.

Sincerely,

Samara Pearson