

May 2, 2023



Dear Senate and House Higher Education Conference Committee Members,

Minnesota Association of
Private College Students

On behalf of the Minnesota Association of Private College Students (MAPCS), we write to share our input as you put together the Higher Education Bill. Thank you for the opportunity to provide this feedback.

At MAPCS, students from 18 private nonprofit colleges collaborate monthly to search for ways to assist in and advocate for the improvement of our campuses and the students who attend them. One of our main objectives is to increase the impact of the Minnesota State Grant to support more students and promote equity in access to higher education. The State Grant empowers over 60,000 students when it comes to selecting a college that is the best fit for each individual student in our state.

When students receive the Minnesota State Grant, they not only obtain the financial assistance needed to be successful in higher education, but also the backing of a state government which encourages them to achieve their dreams. Students who are underrepresented in higher education are given a chance to beat statistics and succeed. Currently, 59% of Minnesota students of color and Native American students who attend college in the state receive a State Grant award.

The Senate Bill includes a new financial aid program that grants tuition-free college for qualifying students at public institutions. While this is a big step for Minnesota students, it excludes low- and middle-income students at nonprofit colleges. At MAPCS, we believe that equitable access to higher education best serves students when they have the power of choice. Therefore, we ask that financial aid be made available to any student in financial need at any institution – private or public. Investing in the Minnesota State Grant program, rather than creating a new program only accessible to students who attend public institutions, will benefit all students who have different educational needs.

We ask the Higher Education Conference Committee to invest in Minnesota State Grants which is an investment in the future of Minnesota. It is an investment in equity. It is an investment in choosing the best option for each student. Because of your support, children can become students and students can become leaders — leaders that are needed in our schools, workforce, and communities.

We are grateful that the Senate has proposed increasing the appropriation to \$1 million per year for the Hunger Free Campus Grants and opening access to private non-profit colleges and universities if they meet the grant criteria. Access to apply for these grants has been a MAPCS

priority for a number of years and was included in last year's conference committee report. We urge the conference committee to adopt this provision.

We appreciate your consideration as you invest in students to create leaders such as yourself and those around you.

With great regards,

Emily Hilderbrand, MAPCS Chair and Student Body President, Hamline University

Ryan Eatchel, MAPCS Legislative Co-Chair and Legislative Affairs Senator, University of St Thomas

Birgen Nelson, MAPCS Legislative Affairs Co-Chair and Student Senate Co-President, Gustavus Adolphus College

Joseph Gonzalez, Vice President of Student Relations and Affairs, Concordia University, St. Paul

Blake Birno, Student Body President, Bethel University

Malodi Yangwaue, Student Senate Official at St. Catherine University

Riley Hall, Student Senate Vice President of Public Affairs, Saint Mary's University of Minnesota

Betelehem Zerihun, President, Ausburg Day Student Government, Augsburg University

Andre Silva, Student Senate President, Bethany Lutheran College

Mattie Krause, Student Body President, University of Northwestern St. Paul

Elizabeth Hamak, Senate Vice President, College of St. Benedict

Hannah Paysse, President, Student Government Association, Concordia College

Angelica Franaschouk, Undergraduate Student Government Executive President, University of St. Thomas

Bobbie Pennington, Student Body President, Macalester College

Mariam Zewdu, Vice President, Carleton Student Association, Carleton College

cc: Commissioner Dennis Olson, Office of Higher Education
Sydney Spreck, Governor Walz's Office