

May 10, 2022

Chairs Bernardy, Tomassoni, and Members of the Higher Education Conference Committee:

On behalf of the University of Minnesota, I want to express our sincere appreciation to you and your staff for the spirit of collaboration in which we've engaged this session as you've developed your higher education supplemental budget bills. As you begin deliberations in the conference committee, we want to reaffirm our position on certain legislation in the House and Senate bills, pointing out opportunities where we coalesce and where we continue to advocate for support.

We are grateful for the funding levels you have included for the University in the House and Senate bills. Additional resources for student financial aid, student support, public safety, sustainability, and NRRI are critical to keeping the U of M an affordable and accessible institution, keeping all who come to the University safe, and meeting our goals through MPact 2025, our systemwide strategic plan. While we express appreciation, we also highlight, as we have shared in recent testimony and on-going discussions with you, that the funding levels in your request do not fully meet our funding request which was built around strategic goals and objectives we believe are necessary to continue serving Minnesota's needs in education, innovation and discovery, and public service. Specifically, we request you maintain the House position and consider increasing the appropriation for our financial aid and student support request. Each dollar of additional ongoing funding for our students will ensure more will graduate on time, with less or no debt, and enter the workforce ready to contribute.

Further, we encourage you to consider additional funding for public safety at our campuses, a high priority for us as well as students and parents across the state. The House and Senate have taken alternative approaches to supporting this portion of our request, with the Senate providing ongoing funding for personnel and the House providing one time funding for equipment. Each allocation is critical to keeping our campuses and technology safe and we encourage you to maintain both appropriations in your final agreement.

Finally, we ask you to also maintain the House funding levels for the University's requests around sustainability and at NRRI. These provisions were carefully crafted by the Board of Regents and reflect ongoing strategic priorities of the U of M.

We are also grateful for the provision in the Senate that expands the use of funding within the Permanent University Fund (PUF). The Senate provision broadens the use of PUF funding to mineral, mineral-related, or related engineering science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) degree programs, thereby providing scholarships to over 300 students from the Iron Range region earning STEM degrees in Swenson College. We ask that the House accepts the Senate language around these changes.

There are two provisions in the House and Senate bills that raise concerns for the University. The first is the Senate provision tying supplemental budget funding to completion of a commission around collegiate athletics. We have responded previously to this request and we strongly ask you to eliminate this unconstitutional Senate provision entirely.

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Additionally, we have expressed our concerns with a House provision creating a Green Training Program. While we share the commitment to sustainability and the tools necessary to improve our efforts, the program circumvents the collective bargaining process and procedures in place that the University follows today. We respectfully request you reconsider this proposal in your final conference agreement.

As we continue to take important steps together this session, I would like to express my heartfelt thanks for all that you and your staff do to support the University of Minnesota and our shared work to impact and elevate our state and citizens. We greatly welcome the opportunity to provide comments here for your consideration, and we stand ready with appreciation to help answer any additional questions you may have.

With warmest regards,



Joan T.A. Gabel

Cc: Speaker Melissa Hortman
Senate Majority Leader Jeremy Miller
House Republican Leader Kurt Daudt
Senate Minority Leader Melisa López Franzen