

March 17, 2023

Rep. Gene Pelowski  
491 State Office Building  
St. Paul, MN 55155

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

Thank you so much for the opportunity to address you about the important issue of nurturing healthy and economically stable families in our state.

I am proud to serve as the Dean of the College of Education and Learning Design at St. Cloud State University and also as the Executive Director of our Campus Child Care/Early Learning Center, which serves predominantly student parents on our campus. I write to you as a supportive citizen and an expert in the field of early childhood education. Having been an educator for over thirty years, I stand in strong support all of education enhancing related funding proposals.

I write to champion the efforts around the student parent support initiatives. We work closely with the families we serve in our child care center at SCSU. In addition to providing a high quality early learning and care setting, we serve them in several ways. We are awardees of a federal CCAMPIS grant (Child Care Access Means Parents in School) through which we fund child care tuition costs, a student parent support center, parent education opportunities, and social connection opportunities for the families. We also help connect families to the various resources they may need, whether it be campus based or in the community.

We serve approximately 30 families with young children in our center and through the grant, and the financial and other support is invaluable to them – in addition to access to a safe and reliable child care option. Most of the families would simply not be able to complete their educational goals without the services we are able to provide. So, not only are we providing access to critical early learning opportunities, we also are able to contribute to the eventual economic stability for these families as they complete degrees and access higher paying jobs.

It would be amazing to grow our capacity on our campus, and also be able to support more student parents in these ways. It is a high-powered combination in our ability to afford access to high-quality child care, and supporting families with resources and educational opportunities as they work to better themselves and their financial/economic status.

I also see this as an important role of our institutions of higher education, and building our capacity to function as support for families in this way is critical.

Thank you!

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Jennifer Mueller". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Jennifer Mueller