

Board of Trustees,

With a quick start to the new year, Students United has been excited to hit the ground running in our legislative advocacy efforts at the state and federal level.

Students United's top legislative priority at the Minnesota legislature is the complete funding of Minnesota State's budget request. Students are dedicated to working throughout the session —on top of classes and student life—to ensure that the cost of attending our institutions remains stable and that student services are expanded. We have already started to voice our support in both the house and the senate with State Chair McNicholes testifying to the Senate Higher Education Committee two weeks ago, stressing our support for the budget request. Last week, State Chair McNicholes was joined by me and four of our board members, the student body presidents, from Minnesota State University Moorhead, St. Cloud State University, Metropolitan State University, and Winona State University at the House Higher Education Committee. All six of us spoke in favor of Minnesota State's budget request while sharing our stories, and the stories of our fellow students, struggling to pay for school and face their post-graduation prospects. Students United will continue to put our lobbying efforts into supporting the budget request into next month, when we will have our virtual student meetings with legislators from all over the state.

We are hopeful that students' hard work and dedication to lobbying for sufficient funding for our colleges and universities will ensure that the cost of attending our institutions in the middle of an unprecedented set of circumstances is more manageable. Students United is looking forward to the affordability and equity funding for our universities. Our dedication to basic needs, mental health resources, OERs, and expansive scholarship programs are necessities for students.

At the federal level, we have sent comments to the new administration about priorities needed in policies impacting higher education, including our support for the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act. More specifically we support reauthorization that would reduce barriers to education through additional Pell Grant funding, basic needs support for students and institutions, investment in open educational resources, and student borrower relief. On Pell Grant funding, we are advocating for the program to be doubled in size. The pandemic has also expanded the number of students that do not have their basic needs met. Students United will be advocating for congress to ensure colleges expand on food insecurity programs. We would also like to see an increase in the funding for the Open Textbook pilot program to help alleviate the burden of textbook expenses on students. Finally, we would like to see expansive federal student loan relief. Knowing the discussions of the new administration regarding student loan forgiveness, we are launching an eye-catching campaign designed to advocate for student debt relief by highlighting the facts and the feelings about the nations over \$1,700,000,000,000 in national student debt. We hope that all of you will join us in supporting these initiatives, just as we are partnering with you at the state level.

We are hopeful that our students' lobbying efforts will help increase the amount of funding that the state legislature will give our system so that students' financial burden can be alleviated, their mental health and basic needs resources can be better funded, and so students can continue to thrive in our system.

Regards,



Emma Zellmer, Students United Vice Chair