



Chair Moe, Members of the Board of Trustees,

Good afternoon! Today, I will be joining you all virtually as I am feeling under the weather and taking some time to recharge. Although I am saddened to not be there in-person, I am very eager to share with you all the recent progress of our advocacy efforts at the state, federal, and system level.

Amidst a day ridden with snowstorms and plummeting temperatures, students across our seven-state universities took to the capital during our State Advocacy Day to continue advocating for basic needs and accessibility at the end of February. With the help of our State Advocacy training panel, our students were empowered to share their stories and personal experiences with their representatives to advance legislation in support of increasing affordability, basic needs, and civic engagement on their campuses, such as fully funding a tuition freeze and continued funding for mental health resources and support services. We would like to extend our gratitude to Dr. Chernega and additional IFO members for organizing a very successful rally at the Capitol. Speaking on behalf of our staff and students that participated, we were very moved to see the support from faculty, administrators, legislators, and local community members who support making higher education accessible. As mentioned at the rally, higher education is a right, and all Minnesotans deserve to have equal and affordable access to our higher education institutions with full support from both our legislature and system office.

A successful day at the State Capitol paved the way for our students to continue advocating for equitable and sustainable policies. For instance, our Bemidji Board member, Kendra Draeger, and I testified in support of Senator Oumou Verbeten's bill to address menstrual equity on our campuses. We hope that Minnesota State will join us in encouraging Chair Pelowski and the House Higher Education Committee to hear this bill as well. St. Cloud State University student, Marwah Asif, also testified in front of the Senate Higher Education Committee last week on the need of expanding the hunger-free campus grant.

Along with our state advocacy, Students United's Board and officers traveled to Washington, D.C. two weeks ago to advocate for our federal legislative agenda. Like our state platform, we have focused on the A,B,C's of higher education at the federal level.

We met with the entire Minnesota congressional delegation, the U.S. Department of Education, and other partners to share our priorities.

Students United would also like to express our support for the proposed maximum increases and discretionary sustainability fee as read in Board Policy 5.11 and System procedure 5.11.1. We continue to support raising the fee maximum for the student life/activities fee, and we are excited to see the proposal of a discretionary sustainability fee. We received substantial feedback from our students in support of this fee, including our student leaders at Bemidji. We are eager to see the impact of the sustainability fee as it supports the diverse green initiatives across the seven state universities.



Additionally, I would like to reiterate that Students United is an organizing body that represents and advocates for the needs of ALL students. That said, we would like to express how deeply concerned and angered we are after hearing of the violent threats our Black Students at Bemidji are facing. We as an organization and as individuals do not tolerate any threat or action that is harmful to the physical and mental well-being of our students. Staff members have reached out to several student centers in Bemidji and across the other six universities to offer support and resources for students impacted by these incidents. We will continue to collaborate with our fellow partners and colleagues across the system to continue doing the work to ensure the safety of our BIPOC students, staff, and faculty.

Thank you again for your time. I am more than happy to answer any questions you all may have.