



November 9, 2022

Chair Moe, Chancellor Malhotra, and Trustees,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written remarks today. I'm sorry I wasn't able to provide remarks in person, but I needed to get back to Rochester for another appointment. It was a pleasure to spend last month's meetings with you at Ridgewater - Hutchinson. What a great community and campus!

At that meeting, Chair Moe, you asked each of the bargaining unit leaders to promise to work with you and the Board to receive the biggest funding ask of Minn State's history. By talking to our members, our legislators, our connections, and our communities. And on Tuesday night, November 8, Minnesota took the first step in achieving that goal. All three branches of government will be working together, not against each other, and we have more promise of funding that ask than we had on November 7<sup>th</sup>. The people of Minnesota have spoken.

Last session, when we had a \$1.9 billion surplus, our legislators couldn't work together to get the needs of Minnesota taken care of. They were too busy arguing and fighting amongst each other. Now that Minnesota has responded their feelings of how last session went, it's time for us to work together for our faculty, staff, students, and communities. Now is not the time to ease up on the gas pedal.

The Minn State Policy Committee looks forward to working with you at the Capitol and pledges to lobby for Minn State's interests with our legislators.

Onto other less positives topics, we remain concerned about the extension of NextGen. While we understand and agree with wanting to make sure everything is good to go and we aren't rushing payroll and other services, we are concerned with the additional funding that our colleges and universities will be responsible for. Our institutions are already struggling mightily and we can't see where these increased dollar amounts will come from without placing the losses on the backs of AFSCME members. We have lost enough frontline staff and are already so very lean in staff.

As some of you are aware, there have been numerous safety concerns at Metro State in the library. I have met with President Arthur and her team, and some changes have been made. We have a meeting on November 21 to see how things are going, and decide what next steps are needed. I am happy with the communication and how we are working together to hopefully reach a solution.

Lastly, the inconsistencies of telework continue to be a problem for AFSCME staff. While we understand and agree with the fact that not all positions are able to telework, the employees who can and are not given the opportunity continue to be frustrating.

For example, we have two employees in the same department, their offices about ten feet apart. Both are clerical. One employee, in the AFSCME bargaining unit, with two school-aged children, who has worked in the department for fifteen years and has no disciplinary issues in her file, asked to telework part-time occasionally when the need arises. Absolutely not, not an option, don't talk to me about it, and don't ask again.

The other employee, in the AFSCME bargaining unit, who also has school-aged children, who has been with the department for one year, and has no disciplinary issues in her file, asked to telework 98% of the time, maybe coming to campus a couple days a month because she's moving three hours away. That was accommodated and the rest of the department notified after the employee was at home. As a side note, the previous employee in this exact position was forced to leave employment because she wanted to move away and work from home.

The only difference? The two employees have two different supervisors. Currently, there is no appeal process in place for us to even take next steps. It's a supervisor decision, and that's where it lives or dies. That's within one department. Now imagine the inconsistencies between departments and from college to college. That perfectly paints the picture of the frustration felt with inconsistent practices for teleworking.

To end on a happy note, congratulations to Chancellor Malhotra on his upcoming retirement. I personally have enjoyed working with you and feel like AFSCME's relationship with you has been much improved over the years you have led the Minn State system. While we are sad to see you go, you have more than earned this retirement. Hopefully you stick with it this time! Thank you for all you've done for Minn State and for working together with AFSCME. We wish you nothing but the very best!

Thank you again for your time today. Please reach out to me if you have any questions or would like further information.

Jennifer Erwin  
AFSCME Minn State Policy Committee President