

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

December 3, 2020

The Honorable Robert King
Assistant Secretary for Postsecondary Education
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue SW
Washington, D.C. 20202

Dear Assistant Secretary King:

We write in strong support of the Minnesota State System’s application to the Department of Education’s Open Textbooks Pilot Program.

Minnesota State is the third-largest system of state colleges and universities in the nation and includes 30 colleges and universities with 54 campuses throughout Minnesota. The system serves over 340,000 students annually—including more veterans, students of color, first-generation students and low-income students than any other higher education system in the state. The Open Textbooks Pilot Program will help the Minnesota State System lead in the development of open source textbooks, thereby saving money for students and expanding our nation’s education workforce.

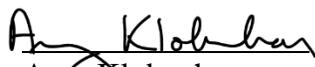
The Minnesota State System has the proven capacity to create and run a successful open textbooks program. For several years, Minnesota State System has promoted textbook affordability through the use of the Open Educational Resources (OER) program. Through this program, the system has helped launch statewide open textbook review programs, funded faculty development opportunities, promoted an open textbook library, created local campus projects to achieve immediate savings for students, and launched zero-textbook-cost degrees at five colleges this year alone. Under the Department of Education’s Open Textbooks Pilot Program, the system will partner with six state colleges and universities—as well as the Open Education Network hosted at the University of Minnesota—to build on these proven models of textbook publishing, resource reviews, and open textbook promotion.

This pilot program initiative will also help alleviate the high cost of a college degree and the shortage of new teachers across our state by increasing the affordability of textbooks and resources in teacher education programs. Students in education programs across the system will save money by replacing expensive publisher textbooks with less expensive openly-licensed resources while receiving a top-notch education. By responding to the financial needs of students—especially during this ongoing health and economic crisis—this program will increase retention rates and produce more teachers available to teach throughout Minnesota school districts.

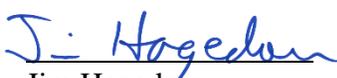
The pilot program proposed by the Minnesota State System has the potential to expand resources, improve instruction and learning, and achieve significant savings for students and

schools. We urge your strong consideration of the system's application. If you have any questions, please contact Ashley Bykerk on Senator Klobuchar's staff at Ashley_Bykerk@klobuchar.senate.gov or Amy Johnson Korba on Senator Smith's staff at amy@smith.senate.gov.

Sincerely,

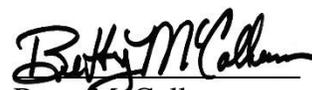

Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator


Tina Smith
United States Senator


Jim Hagedorn
Member of Congress

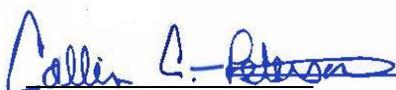

Angie Craig
Member of Congress

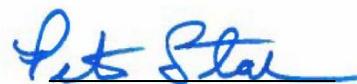

Dean Phillips
Member of Congress


Betty McCollum
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Ilhan Omar
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Collin C. Peterson
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