

*Dear Senator Rarick,*

*My name is George Sawyer, and I am the dad of Jake Sawyer who was on the University of Minnesota men's gymnastics team before it was mis-judged as a financial liability to the University, after a 118 year storied legacy for the University. I am writing to express my strong disagreement with this decision.*

*Senator Rarick sir, I've been involved in sports of one kind or another all my life and would like to respectively state emphatically that gymnastics is one of a few unique and elite sports. It instills in our boys and young men the qualities we used to emphasize above all else. Courage, a hard work ethic, perseverance, self-reliance, discipline, time management, manners, creativity, competitiveness, punctuality, passion, the ability to handle extreme pressure and seldom seen humility to name but a few. However, the decision the University made sent a strong message to these young men that their hard work, dedication and representing the University in a very positive manner wasn't as important as a relatively small amount of money. My son said it felt like a slap in the face. These are young men who are high achievers and graduate early, or on time. They major in engineering, medical, science and usually with scholastic honors. I've been around these young men 17 years and can say without doubt, they are the type of young men we should be encouraging and rewarding. I believe the people who made this decision should be ashamed and held accountable for putting the University in a very bad light. I may be old fashioned, but I thought a State's flagship university would be mostly motivated to provide excellence in higher education. Perhaps they are, but only if the money is right. Eighty-five full ride scholarships for one program leaves no doubt where priorities have gone and renders the Title IX aspect of their decision moot.*

*I am following very closely what transpires at the hearing on February 15th, especially any positive movement toward transparency of the use of taxpayer money for higher education and benefits to student athlete programs, specifically the reinstatement of Men's gymnastics, Men's indoor track, and Men's tennis.*

*Thank you for your time.*

*Sincerely and Respectfully,*

*George S. Sawyer*