Good afternoon everyone,

Thank you for the opportunity to share my perspective on SF 3001. My name is Zeke Jackson and I am a junior at the University of Minnesota studying Political Science and Finance. I believe this bill is incredibly timely and is a step in the right direction for Minnesota students.

Today, we find ourselves in a unique financial and economic environment – it's an environment that presents challenges that this committee has the power to address. Despite the massive surplus in Minnesota's budget, our students are struggling. Over the last decade, tuition at the University of Minnesota has risen by 32%. Over the last year, inflation has been 7.5%. Meanwhile, here at the U of M, student wages have barely budged.

I support this bill for a few key reasons. First, the timing is right to conduct an analysis on optimization of Minnesota's work-study programs. I can't speak for all work-study programs across the state, but I believe that the University of Minnesota is generally abusing its unique status as a land-grant institution to depress student wages. Although some students here are paid up to $15 per hour, there are many more who are working closer to $10 per hour. In our state, the higher education model is a behemoth of an industry that's putting our youth into debt before they've even started their careers. That's a systemic issue, but the state grant is an effective solution for right now.

And personally, the state of Minnesota has made my education possible. The funding I've received allows me to pay my bills, to pay for groceries, and to work fewer than 20 hours per week. The financial aid that the state provides gives me the freedom to focus on my education and apply the skills I'm gaining from my education to my passions - and scaling that up is worth way more than the cost of this bill.

Please invest in this bill - invest in me, invest in current and future students. Thank you for your time and consideration. I can be reached via my school email at jack1379@umn.edu.

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