

March 22, 2023

Minnesota Senate  
Health and Human Services Committee  
2107 Minnesota Senate Building  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chair Wiklund and Committee Members:

My name is Beth Jones and I am the Executive Chef at The Campus Club at the University of Minnesota. I am writing in support of SF 2647, which would provide ongoing funds to support the distribution of prepared meals to Minnesotans in need.

We have partnered with Second Harvest Heartland through their Kitchen Coalition program since November of 2022. Our team currently makes around 1800 meals each week, 1200 of which go to University of Minnesota Students who are experiencing food insecurity. To date, we've prepared 187,861 meals in total, with 54,230 of those meals staying on campus for both undergraduate and graduate students with families.

The problem of campus hunger at the University of Minnesota receives little attention. Many believe that if a student graduates from high school and attends college, they're on a steady course to success. This assumption ignores the reality that pre-pandemic, 1 in 5 University of Minnesota students reported concerns of running out of money for food before the end of the month. Numerous graduate students are living paycheck to paycheck and struggle to feed their children who live with them in campus housing.

The Campus Club and Kitchen Coalition have established three, weekly meal distributions to get healthy, ready-to-eat meals to students every Thursday at Coffman Union, and in family student housing at Como Community Cooperative and Commonwealth Terrace Cooperative. The 900 meals we provide at these distributions typically run out in less than an hour. More meals are needed to meet the needs of students on campus.

Our chefs tailor these meals to meet the cultural, religious, and dietary needs of the people we serve, knowing that too many of those facing food insecurity don't have the home, health or ability to cook for themselves with food available at their local food shelf. We are proud to help fill this gap in the emergency food landscape and know that our efforts are contributing to Minnesota's hunger fight.

Our hope is that more kitchen partners like us will get the chance to take part in this work, and ongoing state funding would make that a reality. SF 2647 would allow organizations like Second Harvest Heartland to grow operations in the communities they serve, or to expand into new towns and cities across Minnesota where the greatest disparities in food insecurity exist.

It is vital that this year's budget supports our state's emergency food system to help us end hunger in Minnesota. SF 2647 will ensure that every neighbor has a meal that's right for them.

Thank you for your consideration of this bill and your support for Minnesotans experiencing food insecurity.

Sincerely,

Beth Jones  
Executive Chef  
Campus Club of the University of Minnesota  
Minneapolis, MN