

## Undergraduate Student Government 2023 State Legislative Agenda

### Wellness Days, Higher Education

1. This policy would protect students going through a mental health crisis from stigmatization by their institution. [Twelve states](#) have codified Wellness Days into their state statutes to support student mental health. **Over 75% of students said they've experienced mental health issues such as stress, anxiety, and depression, and those issues are increasingly cited as reasons why students skip class.** Our proposed Wellness Days legislation would **allow students to access three mental health days per semester** (consecutively or non-consecutively) to take care of themselves. Instructors would have to abide by this policy and prohibit instructors from penalizing students for utilizing these days.

### Embedded Counselors, Higher Education

1. **Our proposed legislation would expand the current Embedded Counselor program on campus to all MN Colleges.** One of the biggest student basic needs on campus right now is access to free mental health counseling. In the 2022 UMN Fall Incoming Student Survey, about **80% of students stated that they would be likely to utilize free counseling on campus.** Currently, our Student Service Fees pay for 10 sessions per academic year. **Students going through a mental health crisis are forced onto a 3-6 week waitlist.** Boynton and Student Counseling Services are both struggling to meet the need demonstrated on campus because of the lack of counselors available. Currently, only the Carlson School of Management has an Embedded Counselor who only sees current Carlson students.

### Tenant Rights, Judiciary, Housing

1. The first piece of this legislation will require that landlords **do not pressure tenants** who have signed at least a 10-month lease to renew their lease until at least 4 months have passed. Landlords pressure students to renew their leases as early as 15 days upon moving in for the next leasing period, after which landlords may sign the unit away. According to [survey data](#) from USG, **approximately 73.7% of respondents were required to renew their lease for the 2020-21 school prior to January 2020 in order to keep their unit** for the following year. Some landlords requested the renewal as early as October 1st. Passing this legislation will allow students a reasonable time period to explore options before renewing their next lease while allowing them the exclusive right to maintain their unit without fear.
2. The second piece of this provision that we are proposing requires the landlord or an agent of the landlord's office to conduct a walkthrough of the unit that the tenant will be occupying at the start and end of the lease term. This walkthrough at the start of the lease allows for a close inspection of the condition of the unit to ensure good living conditions

for the tenant. Conducting a walkthrough at the end of the lease provides for the landlord to make sure that the tenant is leaving their unit as it was received, and also allows the landlord to address any issues or damages with the tenant then. This provision protects both tenant and landlord and holds both parties responsible and accountable.

3. The third piece of this provision that we are proposing is that when a tenant is required to end the lease before their stated end date, the burden of finding a new tenant does not fall on the current tenant. It also proposes that if the tenant and the landlord were to go to court over the breach of the lease, the efforts of both parties to find a new tenant would be considered before the judge decides on damages. This would help students who may have to leave a lease early because of emergencies or their inability to afford the unit.
4. Last Session's Language on Early Lease Renewal: [H.F. 3759](#)

### **Hunger-Free Expansion with LeadMN, Higher Education**

1. This provision will expand the Hunger Free Campus program. University of Minnesota - Twin Cities was designated as a "Hunger Free Campus" in 2021 by USG. Expansion of the program to allow for more funding for institutions that are both trying to receive their designation and institutions that have been designated as "Hunger Free" is significant to combat the inaccessibility of food for college students throughout MN.
2. Proposed expansions of the previous Hunger Free Bill would allow for funding to go towards setting up resources to combat the high costs of groceries and food deserts throughout college campuses across the state. Resources that this money would go towards would include setting up Campus Co-op stores, expanding current meal programs and food pantries, etc. Funding is critical for expanding Hunger Free, as campuses are looking for more resources to increase access to food. This would reduce the financial burden on students who already have to pay the increasing costs of tuition and housing.

### **Board of Regents Reform, Higher Education**

1. In 2022, USG supported a Board of Regents Reform bill authored by Rep. Schultz. We are planning to bring it back with minor changes in the language.
2. This proposed legislation requires a faculty seat (for tenured University faculty), a labor seat, and a tribal seat on the Board of Regents. It also provided provisions for redistricting and reapportionment of congressional districts, and how those would affect elections to the Board. The legislation also proposed two-term limits for Regents and allowed for the proposed seats and the student seat on the Board to be paid as a "compensated University employee".
  - a. The proposal for the faculty, labor, and tribal seat allows for the representation of populations that make up and/or engage with the University's student body every day. The proposal for redistricting and reapportionment assures that there is a sure number of seats on the Board of Regents, whether congressional or at-large

(because of the loss of a congressional district). The proposal for term limits on the Regents allows for more current and newer perspectives to be introduced on the Board, to allow the Board of Regents to properly govern the University population that is constantly innovating and exploring. The compensation of the proposed seats and the student seat allows for financial accessibility to those populations, who may not be otherwise able to serve the Board in a volunteer capacity due to its necessary time commitments.

3. The legislation also calls for **changes to RCAC membership** and removes their ability to informally impose term limits on Regents because we are calling for formal term limits to be imposed. Changing the RCAC membership allows for more student, faculty, and tribal representation from all five UMN campuses and designated councils.
4. Proposed changes to the old language eliminate the provision which would prohibit floor nominations at the joint legislature convention. Floor nominations allow for capable and eligible candidates who may have been removed from the RCAC process or those candidates who may have not been able to apply for the RCAC interview process to still be eligible to serve.
5. Last Session's Language: [H.F. 2578 \(Research Summary\)](#)

#### **Menstrual Equity with Students United, Higher Education**

1. Access to free menstrual products across campus is inconsistent, as academic buildings often are stocked with pads and tampons, while dorms are not. Students should not be forced to have to walk across campus to access menstrual products because of the inconsistencies. This bill would propose appropriations that would make sure that all University buildings are adequately stocked with menstrual products. This investment would help financially students, who have to make frequent purchases of these products.

#### **Support for Tax Conformity, Taxes**

- Support for Tax Conformity

#### **Support for Democracy for the People Act, Elections**

- Support for Democracy for the People Act

#### **Support for Solar for Schools, Energy**

- Support for the Solar for Schools Program