

March 9, 2023.

The Honorable Omar Fateh, Chair
Senate Higher Education Committee
3219 Minnesota Senate Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chair Fateh and Members of the Committee:

The Undergraduate Student Government at the University of Minnesota- Twin Cities currently has 140 student representatives across all colleges and majors, and we serve over 30,000 undergraduates who make up our student body. Each semester we conduct a survey to learn about the problems that affect students the most and work with professionals at Boynton Health and other departments to advocate for them.

College campuses are facing a basic needs crisis, including the University of Minnesota- Twin Cities. Our classification as a food desert, lack of access to mental health professionals, and lack of available and affordable housing for students are problems that students face every year on our campus. Solving the basic needs crisis that is not just on our campus, but on the campuses of dozens of colleges in the state of Minnesota is not an easy task, which is why the creation of a working group with the right professionals is necessary. When coming up with our legislative agenda and ideas to implement on our campus for basic needs, those professionals are who I consult. Following their consultations and making the necessary investments and improvements is important when trying to make college more accessible, especially to the underserved populations who get impacted by these problems the most.

Establishing a working group of professionals who the legislature can look to when implementing policy and investing in higher education and its students would help uplift the work that students and advocates already do on college campuses and at the legislature. Taking the right recommendations from professionals allows for smart financial investments that benefit students who will finally have a chance to stop worrying about affording college. Making sure the resources offered on our campuses can support the basic needs of our students is what this bill is working to do, which is why the Undergraduate Student Government of the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities is in support of Senate File 2306.

Respectfully,

Siya Sakhardande

Siya Sakhardande, 2022-23 State Coordinator