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March 28, 2023

Dear Members of the Senate Higher Education Committee:

We are writing to share our support for the below provisions in SF 2075, the higher education omnibus bill. We know that everyone's mental health has been impacted by the last several years of the COVID-19 pandemic. Depression and anxiety have had record increases worldwide. High school students have had their academic and social lives disrupted. Young adults with still developing brains have experienced collective trauma and uncertainty. Black, Indigenous, and people of color communities have experienced continued and heightened racial trauma. Learning in this environment can be difficult no matter the age or situation of the student. That's why these investments are important to support students' mental health. We are happy to support these provisions:

- Investments for emergency assistance for postsecondary students including 24/7 resources for peer support and mental health treatment;
- Funding for Hunger-Free Campus Grants;
- Funding for the Addiction Medicine Graduate Medical Education Fellowship at Hennepin County Medical Center;
- Funding for wrap around services and support for people who were in foster care up to age 27; and
- Student-parent support initiatives and screenings for mental health, substance use disorder, and other health concerns.

We would also like to let the committee know about another great support for Minnesota State students through our college-linked mental health programs. These programs are already established in statute and connect students to community providers who embed into the college campus and use telehealth. The legislature provided onetime funding in 2019 which proved critical to the two grantees Rochester Community and Technical College and Minnesota State Community and Technical College. Both noted the positive impact the program had on their campuses in their grant reports. RCTC reported, "It would be difficult to imagine how the College would have been positioned to support students through the stress and anxiety of the pandemic without the campus-based mental health services provided by ZVHC (Zumbro Valley Health Center)." Increased funding for college-linked services were introduced this year in SF 2629. We hope that you will continue to prioritize mental health in our colleges and universities, and we thank you for your work, time, and attention.

Sincerely,

Sue Abderholden, MPH  
Executive Director

Elliot Butay  
Senior Policy Coordinator