



Dear Chair Fateh and members of the Senate Higher Education Committee,

Two years ago when the Foster Independence Grant (FIG) legislation passed, granting free college education and funds that cover the full cost of attendance for anyone who has been in foster care in Minnesota, it was a huge win! A win for C2i, furthering our mission in removing barriers Fosters face as they embark on their education and career journeys. But most importantly, this was a huge win for Fosters all across the state. With debt-free education becoming a possibility for young people who have been raised by the counties, we have seen increased numbers in people furthering their education, remaining stably housed, and accomplishing their other goals. We've also seen a fundamental change in young people's outlooks and an increased hope for a thriving future knowing they wouldn't have to enter young adulthood in debt.

However, with a budget shortfall, this grant program could end up with a waitlist affecting up to 40% of applicants. We are finding this possibility out at the same time as the young people we serve, and we are all extremely concerned; we've been fielding calls from people panicking that they won't be able to finish their education, will end up homeless and lose their daycare and general support to survive..

This is not a reflection of their desire or their potential; this is a systemic failure. Two years ago, Gov. Walz and Minnesota's legislature agreed that Fosters deserve better. We celebrated the passage of the bipartisan Fostering Higher Education Act, which has provided a beacon of hope for Fosters that their dreams are now attainable. Together we championed that historic investment in Minnesota Fosters. Yet, once again, we are seeing our State break their commitment.

For two years, the Fostering Independence Grants (FIG) have been used to help Fosters maintain stable housing, reduce work hours, and provide for their basic needs so that they can focus on being students. The introduction of a waitlist is not an acceptable solution. Fosters are way to used to broken promises and false hope, and changes to FIG will cause irreparable harm. The financial uncertainty of a waitlist will cause some students to end their college journey early. It will cause others to not begin at all.

Please do not allow the state of Minnesota to break this commitment, which was only made two years ago. Those students who started college for the first time because of FIG have not even graduated yet. **I am asking for your support to correct the projected shortfall for FIG and allocate funds from the state surplus for funding necessary to support the original legislation.**

Thank you,
C2i Staff