



April 18, 2024

The Honorable Omar Fateh, Chair
Senate Higher Education Finance and Policy Committee
95 University Avenue West
Minnesota Senate Building, Room 3219
St. Paul, MN 55155

The Honorable Gene Pelowski, Chair
House Higher Education Finance and Policy Committee
491 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chairs Fateh and Pelowski and members:

The Office of Higher Education staff and I appreciate the courtesy and positive working relationship you and your House and Senate staff have provided this Legislative Session. We are grateful for your thoughtfulness in discussing proposals as you put together your Higher Education Budget Omnibus Bills.

Ensuring high-quality postsecondary education in Minnesota is a goal that we all share. Our Licensing and Registration division exists to further this goal, collecting and verifying data and program information before granting schools the ability to accept students and confer degrees. The Higher Education Budget Omnibus Bills include a new fee structure that will strengthen this division's efforts to hold schools accountable. These fees will provide support to division staff, expand team capacity, and encourage schools to approach the licensing and registration process with the same expectation of excellence.

The next item we were happy to see included in the Higher Education Budget Omnibus Bills is the deadline extension for my office to award the David J. Tomassoni Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS) Research Grant. This grant will play a vital role in improving the lives of Minnesotans impacted by ALS, and the flexibility offered by this extension will ensure we award research projects that show the greatest promise of having an impact.

Finally, we want to thank you for your partnership in addressing the projected shortfall for the Fostering Independence Higher Education Grant. Minnesota Foster Youth face unique barriers in accessing higher education, and this grant is breaking down those barriers and changing lives. The overwhelming interest in this program truly justifies the investment and we are grateful to provide the support necessary for Foster Youth to attend college. Being able to transfer funds from the North Star Promise program to cover this shortfall is a common-sense solution that effectively uses allocated

funds. We appreciate the urgency you each showed in addressing this shortfall, and look forward to discussing an increased investment in the program next Legislative Session to ensure funds will continue to meet the need.

Chairs Fateh and Pelowski, I want to once again thank you for the excellent working relationship between the Office of Higher Education staff and your talented, hardworking staff, as well as all committee members. I look forward to working with your committees to ensure the final bill is one that will best serve Minnesota students.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Dennis Olson", with a large, stylized initial "D" and a long, sweeping horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Dennis Olson,
Commissioner