



April 18, 2024

Dear Chair Latz and Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to share **Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota's support of Senate File 3667 as amended**. LSS is a provider of essential services across all 87 counties with more than 2,500 employees who serve one in 63 Minnesotans every year. This includes LSS Financial Counseling which has over 30 years of experience supporting thousands of people in Minnesota and nationwide. We have offices in Brainerd, Duluth, Virginia, Willmar, St. Cloud, Mankato, Minneapolis, and St. Paul. We also partner with LSS Youth Services in Rochester.

LSS has been the grantee of the Office of Higher Education's (OHE) Student Loan Counseling Repayment grant since March of 2020 as referenced in Senate File 3667. The legislature established this grant in 2019 so that student loan borrowers who are Minnesota residents have access to free, confidential, individualized repayment counseling. Minnesotans seek our services because navigating student loan debt repayment is nuanced, complicated, and not clear to borrowers. This grant program has been successful at empowering borrowers to improve their overall finances and bring their student loan repayment current while preventing default.

We have been in discussion with OHE and the Department of Corrections to understand the scope and need for this counseling to incarcerated borrowers. We are thankful for the shared interest and support to ensure they can also experience this meaningful and often life-changing benefit of financial counseling. As the current recipient of OHE's grant, we are committed to finding a way to serve incarcerated borrowers and ensure they have access to enrolling in income-driven repayment plans and keep their loans in good standing.

Thank you, again, for this opportunity. Please contact Erin Sutton, LSS' Senior Director of Advocacy, at erin.sutton@lssmn.org if we may provide further information on this deeply important issue.

Sincerely,

Becky Pakarinen
Senior Director of Financial and Employment Services
Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota