

Dear Chair McEwen and the Senate Labor Committee,

On behalf of the 30,000 undergraduate students our organization represents, we urge you to support [Article 8 of SF 5266](#) to update PELRA to remove outdated bargaining unit determinations and ensure full collective bargaining rights for all student workers at the University of Minnesota. This Article is critical to ensuring all students at the University of Minnesota are given the same rights as other public sector employees.

Currently, the Minnesota Public Employee Relations Act (PELRA) rules around the definition of “employees” and designated “bargaining units” at the University of Minnesota do not work in ways that promote the organization of unions and the expansion of worker rights but have instead been used and manipulated to restrict worker rights and to make union organization as difficult as possible. For example, PELRA excludes full-time undergraduate students under work-study programs and students in connection with the receipt of financial aid from status as public employees. These restrictions are heavily felt on a campus where over 75% of the student body work while attending school.

This is not a radical proposal; many similar institutions have established support for undergraduate students gaining bargaining rights, including: Grinnell College, Dartmouth, California State University, University of Massachusetts at Amherst, Mount Holyoke, Barnard College, Fordham Wesleyan, and Tufts. Likewise, support for allowing undergraduates to unionize in Minnesota has been increasing, as noted by the recent unionization of undergraduates at Macalester College.

We therefore ask for your support for updating PELRA to remove outdated bargaining unit determinations and ensure full collective bargaining rights for all student workers at the University of Minnesota. Under these changes, we believe that all undergraduate workers, post-doctoral fellows, and graduate fellows at the University of Minnesota should be recognized as public employees, which will provide a pathway to collective bargaining for these employees. Additionally, we support alterations to PELRA to prevent attempts to undermine organizing, bargaining, and union composition by reclassifying workers and altering degree and graduation requirements.

We end by affirming the Executive Board of the Undergraduate Student Government’s support for all workers at the University of Minnesota, and encourage all Minnesota legislators to support these necessary changes to PELRA.

We ask that you consider our voices and vote to change these restrictions.

Sincerely,

The Executive Board of the Undergraduate Student Government at the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities