



February, 11, 2025

**Molly Leutz, Policy Director at LeadMN:
College Students Connecting For Change
Testimony submitted in opposition to HF10.**

LeadMN is the statewide student organization for the 26 colleges and 48 campuses in the Minnesota State 2-year system. We represent the interests of over 105,000 students, advocating for college access and affordability for all, and advancing equity in higher education.

LeadMN is committed to dismantling systemic barriers and advocating for equitable and inclusive policies and practices in higher education to ensure that all students have what they need to be successful. HF10, in prohibiting undocumented noncitizens in Minnesota from eligibility for the North Star Promise scholarship program, presents such a barrier, therefore we are in opposition to the bill.

Two-year public institutions serve as pathways to higher education for historically marginalized and underserved students in Minnesota. This includes but is not limited to students of color, first generation students, undocumented students, LGBTQ+ students, students of low socioeconomic status, students with disabilities, veterans, and formerly/currently incarcerated students. For too many of these students, systemic barriers continue to prevent them from achieving success.

The North Star Promise program has been successful in lowering financial hurdles for more than 16,700 students across Minnesota, including 7,350 students at our 2-year community and technical colleges (nearly half of the students awarded the scholarship). Denying access to the North Star Promise based on immigration status is a step backward in Minnesota's dedication to its workforce goals of increasing degree and certificate attainment in adults to 70% and threatens positive but fragile enrollment increases after steep pandemic declines. The North Star Promise is effective in encouraging college attendance; and allowing financial aid for immigrant students is a low-cost, high-reward program. Higher enrollment increases institutional income and generates revenue for colleges in our Minnesota State system from students who would otherwise be unable to attend.

College graduates drive economic growth and Minnesota should be supporting investment in a well-educated workforce. Two-year community and technical colleges in particular offer hands-on education in high-demand career programs which are crucial to the foundation of Minnesota's economy now and in the future. College graduates earn higher incomes, generate exponential support jobs, increase tax revenue and stimulate the state's economy. Educating immigrants is a beneficial and prescient investment for all Minnesotans (evidenced by figures found on our website leadmn.org/advocacy/)

Preventing immigrants from accessing vital financial aid disregards a generation of talent and innovation that can contribute to our communities and Minnesota's long-term prosperity. Students who have grown up, graduated, and contributed to Minnesota deserve equal opportunities to succeed and pursue higher education regardless of immigration status. LeadMN recognizes the important economic and social benefits of an educated population, and opposes HF10 as it presents a short-sighted barrier to access and affordability.

Thank you for your time and consideration as you hear this bill.

Sincerely,

Molly Leutz, LeadMN