

Guiding Question:

"Does the budget of the state of Minnesota
match the values of the state?"



Open World Learning Community Integrated Math 1

 Education

Contributing to a Better World

#WeAreCrew



Open World
Learning



Dear Reader,

The book you hold is one part of a project that the students of Open World Learning Community has been working on since the first week of February. However, their presentations in the Capitol on May 5th, 2026 are the 10th anniversary of this project – a project that encourages these middle schools to ask the question “Does the budget of the state of Minnesota match the values of the state?”

Sometimes they ask “what are the values of the state of Minnesota?” To that, I always answer “the state of Minnesota is made up of the people of Minnesota, and since you are one of those people, you get the right to determine those values.” When you tell this to 12- to 14-year-olds they get excited but a little scared. Phrased this way they start to see that they have a responsibility to ask tough questions and talk to policymakers to see the change they want in the budget.

Are their positions always perfectly polished? Perhaps not; they are, after all, just middle schoolers. Their understanding of complex policies may still be developing. But if you engage with their work, if you seek to understand the earnestness behind their findings, you will see their potential. Engage, learn, and share the hope that the future is indeed bright with these thoughtful and dedicated young people.

Thomas Totushek
National Board-Certified Mathematics Teacher
Open World Learning Community, a Saint Paul Public School

Alphabetical by First Name

Name	District	Group		Name	District	Group
Anna F.	64B	6		Louden B.	67B	14
Arlo M.	65B	13		Lydia M.	67B	7
Audrina W.	67A	2		Mango N.	64A	13
Bahati S.	67B	18		Mavis C.	64A	18
Ben C.	65A	4		Max N.	67A	1
Bennett M.	66B	12		Melita A.	64A	8
Carnell R.	65A	10		Millie J.	66A	1
Ceci C.	66B	2		Momodu F.	65A	11
Charlotte S.	66B	6		Nikolai L.	66B	14
Chester T.	44B	13		Nikolai S.	65B	13
Ciaran S.	66A	9		Oliver L.	64B	4
Clara B.	65B	5		Ollie G.	66B	6
Declan P.	64B	20		Otis O.	64A	9
Edmund K.	64A	20		Patrick W.	64A	16
Eleanor F.	64B	18		Pawsana L.	65A	1
Elizabeth B.	64B	16		Qianna T.	65B	1
Elliot C.	67B	12		Quinn T.	65B	10
Elsa H.	67A	2		Rafael H.	65A	20
Ethan M.	66A	4		Rain T.	64B	8
Finnley F.	64A	7		Rajan A.	66A	19
Felix R.	64A	17		Rocio H.	65B	5
Fuji T.	65A	5		Rosie W.	64A	16
Gavin T.	67B	12		Sadie W.	66B	2
Gideon P.	67B	10		Sally K.	66B	7
Gordon H.	64A	12		Sarisella X.	44B	3
Greta C.	64A	15		Sebrena C.	65A	15
Halvor J.	66A	14		Soren S.	66B	20
Htoo M.	66B	16		Sylas G.	65A	11
Hughes M.	64A	4		Thaddeus H.	38A	14
Isabel B.	64A	8		Theo M.	66B	9
Isabelle T.	67A	3		Thomas S.	67B	11
Jack G.	66A	17		Vivien Y.	67A	3
Jacoby O.	64B	11		Willa B.	64A	18
James D.	44A	19		William S.	64B	15
Julio Y.	67A	19		Xavier L.	65A	9
Junia G.	64B	8		Xio S.	64B	6
Liam T.	66B	10		Zelda J.	64A	15

In Order by District

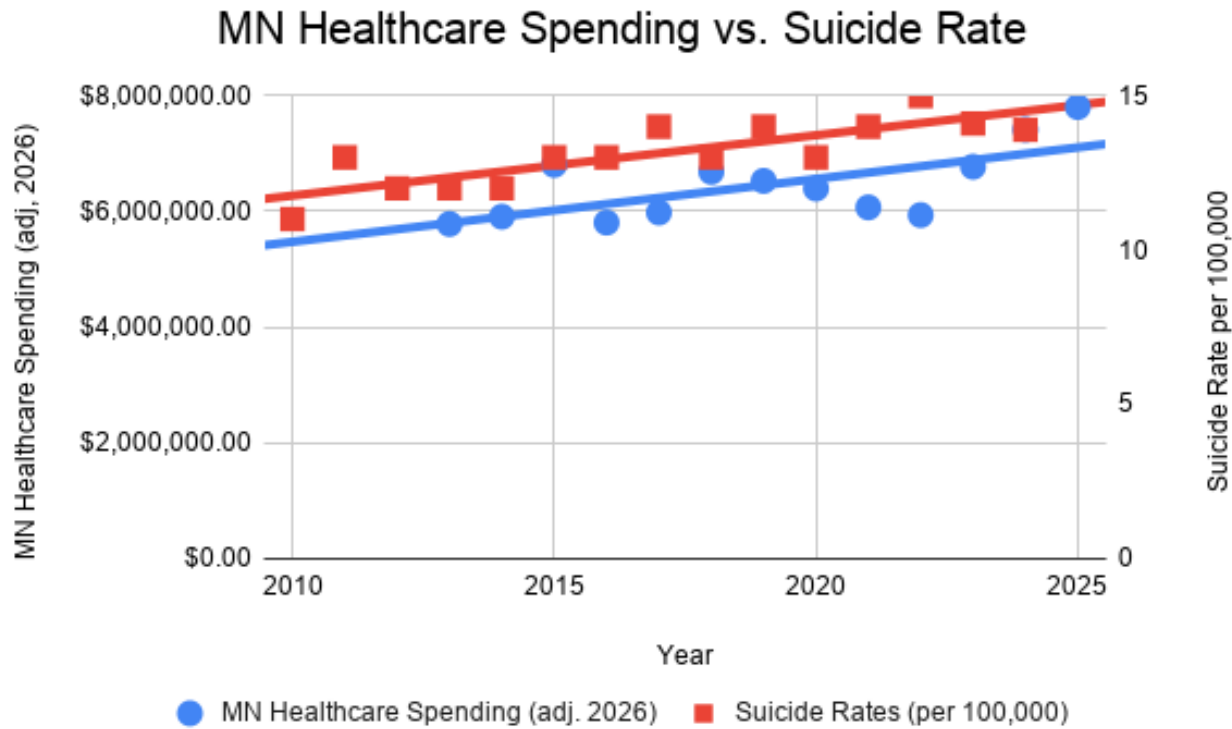
Name	District	Group		Name	District	Group
Thaddeus H.	38A	14		Xavier L.	65A	9
James D.	44A	19		Arlo M.	65B	13
Chester T.	44B	13		Clara B.	65B	5
Sarisella X.	44B	3		Nikolai S.	65B	13
Edmund K.	64A	20		Qianna T.	65B	1
Felix R.	64A	17		Quinn T.	65B	10
Finnley F.	64A	7		Rocio H.	65B	5
Gordon H.	64A	12		Ciaran S.	66A	9
Greta C.	64A	15		Ethan M.	66A	4
Hughes M.	64A	4		Halvor J.	66A	14
Isabel B.	64A	8		Jack G.	66A	17
Mango N.	64A	13		Millie J.	66A	1
Mavis C.	64A	18		Rajan A.	66A	19
Melita A.	64A	8		Bennett M.	66B	12
Otis O.	64A	9		Ceci C.	66B	2
Patrick W.	64A	16		Charlotte S.	66B	6
Rosie W.	64A	16		Htoo M.	66B	16
Willa B.	64A	18		Liam T.	66B	10
Zelda J.	64A	15		Nikolai L.	66B	14
Anna F.	64B	6		Ollie G.	66B	6
Declan P.	64B	20		Sadie W.	66B	2
Eleanor F.	64B	18		Sally K.	66B	7
Elizabeth B.	64B	16		Soren S.	66B	20
Jacoby O.	64B	11		Theo M.	66B	9
Junia G.	64B	8		Audrina W.	67A	2
Oliver L.	64B	4		Elsa H.	67A	2
Rain T.	64B	8		Isabelle T.	67A	3
William S.	64B	15		Julio Y.	67A	19
Xio S.	64B	6		Max N.	67A	1
Ben C.	65A	4		Vivien Y.	67A	3
Carnell R.	65A	10		Bahati S.	67B	18
Fuji T.	65A	5		Elliot C.	67B	12
Momodu F.	65A	11		Gavin T.	67B	12
Pawsana L.	65A	1		Gideon P.	67B	10
Rafael H.	65A	20		Louden B.	67B	14
Sebrena C.	65A	15		Lydia M.	67B	7
Sylas G.	65A	11		Thomas S.	67B	11

Group 1

MN Healthcare Spending vs. Suicide Rate

Max N. (67A), Pawsana L. (65A), Qianna T. (65B), and Millie J. (66A)

Do you know how many people commit suicide in Minnesota? About 813 people from Minnesota commit suicide each year. Brian Short, a mentally disturbed man shot himself, his wife, and his three children. Brian Short went to the emergency room, urgent care, and his family doctor several times to get help for depression and anxiety in the summer of 2015. Allegedly the Park Nicollet Health System did not take Short’s “severe, overwhelming and rapidly worsening” illness seriously enough. Relatives of Brian sued Park Nicollet Health System, alleging that doctors did not do enough to treat Short’s mental illness before he fatally shot his family. This shows that we need to get better healthcare and more reliable systems because a mistake like this could cost everything. Health care providers need to take mental health seriously and we should spend money on people who need help and caring employees, and workers.



In this expedition we are studying MN healthcare spending vs MN suicide rate. We got our data from the MN Department of Health website. The red line, MN suicide rates per 100k, spiked up a lot in 2022, after 2024 the suicide rate had a positive drop and lowered. The blue line is MN healthcare, which is steady but getting slowly higher. When the healthcare spending went down the suicide rate went really high. Only slowly getting higher when healthcare spending went up the suicide rate went down again.

We all as people shouldn’t have to feel like dying is the only way to have peace. Some people have people to rely on for these situations but others don’t have those and struggle a lot. We need more resources for people that feel that way, and make sure that it’s available to everyone. We need more people to care about them, if we cut cost for health care spending the suicide rates would go up.

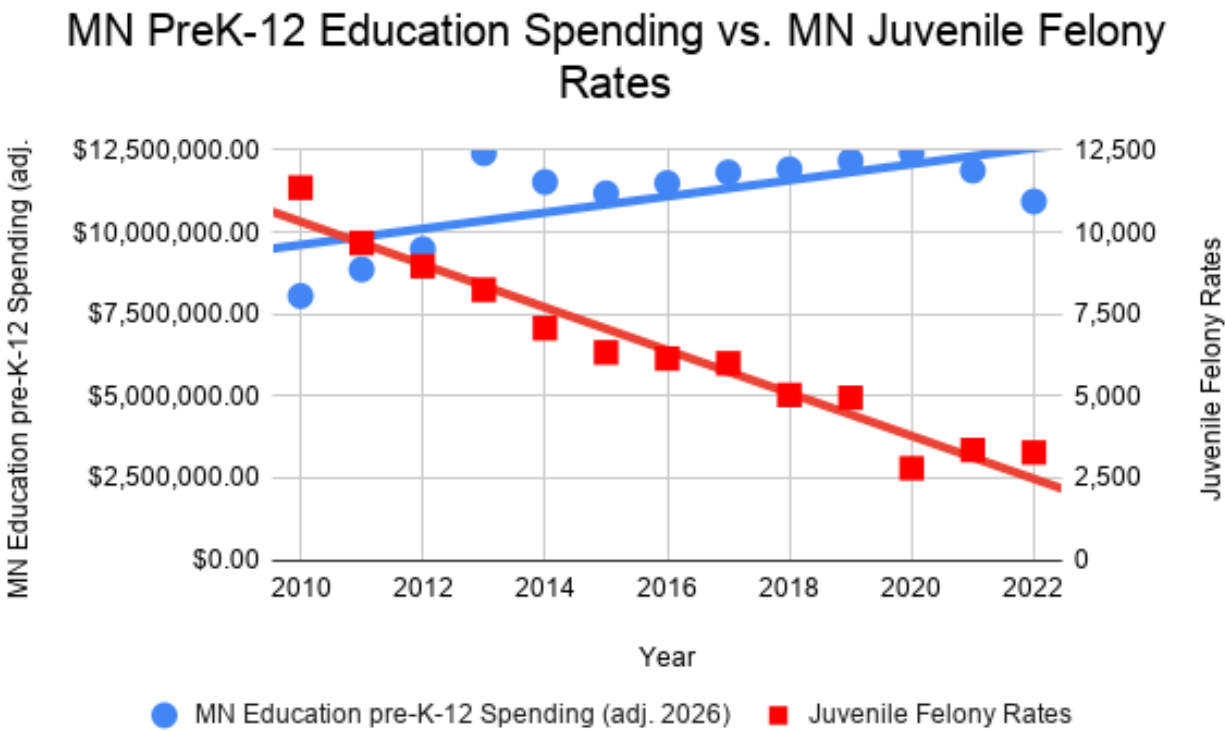
Year	MN Healthcare Spending (act.)	MN Healthcare Spending (adj. 2026)	Suicide Rate (per 100,000)
2013	\$4,093,265	\$5,781,408	12
2014	\$4,248,812	\$5,907,824	12
2015	\$4,889,416	\$6,804,641	13
2016	\$4,229,041	\$5,805,872	13
2017	\$4,464,982	\$5,980,276	14
2018	\$5,093,997	\$6,684,362	13
2019	\$5,051,639	\$6,527,522	14
2020	\$5,072,579	\$6,395,550	13
2021	\$4,880,869	\$6,068,890	14
2022	\$5,130,443	\$5,935,261	15
2023	\$6,228,973	\$6,772,022	14
2024	\$7,031,410	\$7,415,221	14
2025	\$7,624,141	\$7,806,086	
Source	General Fund Spending by Major Category	bls.gov	CDC

We need to raise the healthcare spending in MN because if we do, then the suicide rate will go down.

MN PreK-12 Education Spending vs. MN Juvenile Felony Rates

Elsa H. (67A), Sadie W. (66B), Ceci C. (66B), and Audrina W. (67A)

Frank was born into a family that was known for doing crimes. He committed his first offense before he was even a teenager. The first time he was on probation was for drug violations, theft, arson, and grand theft auto. He was a bad student because of his home life. At school, Frank was known to disrupt the class and be defiant towards teachers during school. He couldn't find a way out of his bad habits and started struggling in school, but even more in his personal life. This all changed one day when he met a teacher. Slowly, he started behaving better in class because of the help of this teacher. While he would still act out it was less often and less intense. Frank's teacher believed in him and believed he could get out of his life of crime. When he got in trouble for his antics around the school, this teacher advocated for him to go to detention instead of a suspension from school. This is because, usually when Frank was suspended he would only watch TV and hang out with bad influences.



His teacher also talked to his mom about his attendance problems. If he was absent, his mom would be notified immediately and if the absence was unexcused, then Frank's mom and his teacher would develop a plan to get him back to school. This teacher also advocated for him to get into social programs after school, like drug and alcohol treatment, and community service work. Because this teacher cared so much about Frank and his future, he graduated from middle school, attends high school regularly, and is off probation now free of his crime ridden past. Frank's story is an example of what can happen to troubled kids if the school system believes in them.

We are studying the amount of juvenile crimes compared to the Minnesota pre-K-12 education spending. We got our information from the Minnesota Government General Spending, and aecf.org. In our data set, our first line is MN pre-K-12 education spending with the blue line. It shows that from 2010-2022 education spending tends to go up and continue to increase. Our second line of our data set is juvenile felony crime rates with the red line. This line shows that crimes committed by kids in pre-K-12 are continuing to go down over the years. These lines work together to show that when we increase MN education pre-K-12 funding, juvenile felony rates tend to go down.

Year	MN PreK-12 (act.)	MN PreK-12 (adj. 2026)	Juvenile Felony Rates
2010	5,395,913	\$8,051,895	11351
2011	6,148,293	\$8,859,325	9669
2012	6,687,479	\$9,478,537	8957
2013	8,905,875	\$12,405,156	8238
2014	8,446,137	\$11,525,922	7067
2015	8,204,234	\$11,181,972	6331
2016	8,516,938	\$11,493,544	6141
2017	8,901,333	\$11,819,217	5997
2018	9,233,048	\$11,917,454	5029
2019	9,587,811	\$12,174,662	4947
2020	9,835,739	\$12,409,352	2796
2021	9,919,135	\$11,874,368	3350
2022	9,960,012	\$10,932,816	3277
2023	10,204,038	\$10,854,380	
2024	11,969,194	\$12,374,123	
Source:	General Fund Spending by Major Area	bls.gov	AECF Data Center

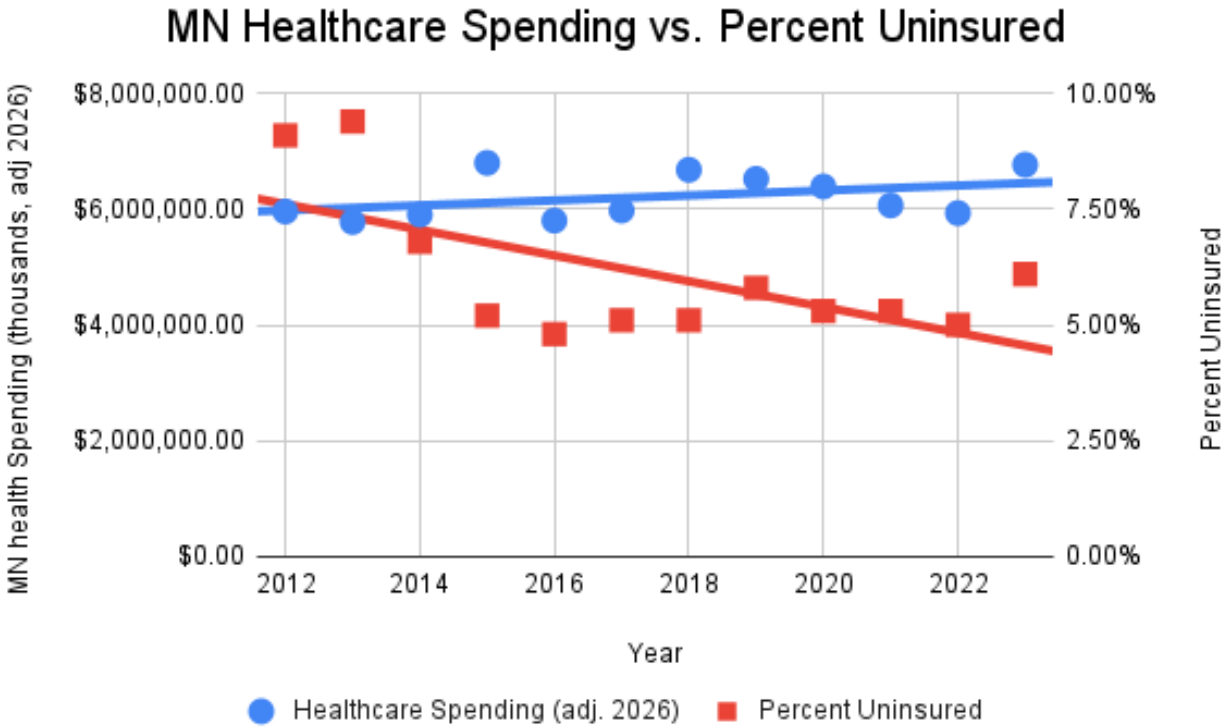
Youth students should be able to participate in academics and receive help no matter their situation. Studies show that if you put more funding into younger students that are in preschool or elementary, students are 15% less likely to become incarcerated. The youth is our future so we should give them the best chances possible, we should be able to fix our lives and our paths to success.

Regularly spending money on PreK-12 education in Minnesota enables children to have a chance of life outside of crime.

MN Healthcare Spending vs. Percent Uninsured

Isabelle T. (67A), Vivien Y. (67A), and Sarisella X. (44B)

A six year old little boy named Drew Kalal, had severe speech delay. He had issues with motor skills. Drew’s parents had insurance, but the high expensive bills were drowning them in stress and helplessness. The co-pays were straining the family’s financial stability. Breanna Kalal, the mother of Drew said,“ Well, when you’re being seen two to three times per week, we were averaging \$400 to \$500 a month just in medical bills.” Later on, Breanna heard from a mother about The United Healthcare Children’s Foundation medical grants aimed for middle class people. She applied and got accepted. Breanna received a 5,000 medical grant. We need more permanent programs like The United Healthcare Children's Foundation to help the people in need. It is vital that we establish this because no family should have to go through this, nor hope for a miracle grant. That way more people can have health insurance and so children can thrive without prolonging health issues.



We are studying MN health spending vs. percent uninsured. We got our data and information from health.state.mn.us, and from the MN compass. Our graph is showing that the percent uninsured is going down which means more people are getting insured, the trend line is decreasing but the scatterplot stays the same so there’s still a significant demographic that are uninsured. The blue trend line for MN health spending is going up slightly but the plots take a dip at some point but go back up.

Our ask to the Minnesota policy makers is to spend more money on healthcare. By committing more funding with the goal to further reduce the percentage of uninsured individuals, this will grant others that are uninsured the availability for health insurance. This increase in spending is very essential to ensure that vulnerable populations and those currently in need gain access to necessary and general medical services.

Around 18,000 to 45,000 people die each year from being uninsured as research indicates that people with healthcare tend to have a longer life expectancy. People with health insurance receive more preventive care. People who receive more preventive care save society a lot more money. This means that providing insurance for people can save up to 14 times return on investment because they seek preventative care.

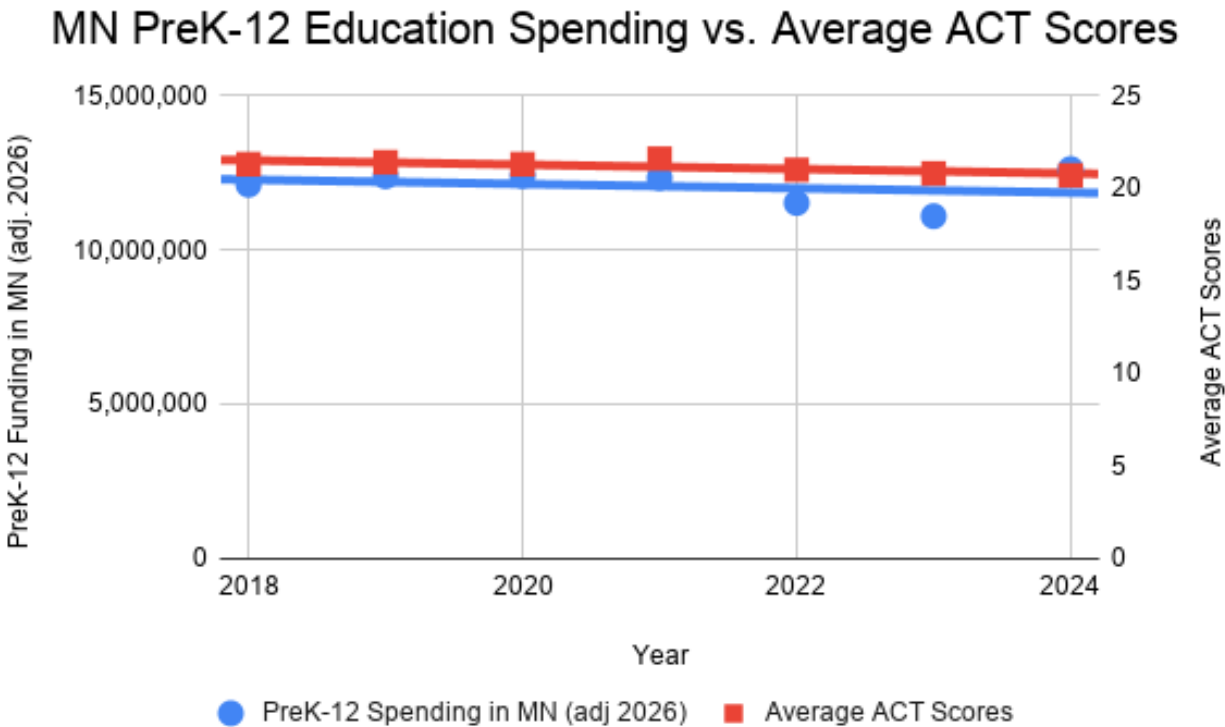
Year	Healthcare Spending (act.)	Healthcare Spending (adj. 2026)	Percent Uninsured
2012	\$4,288,490	\$5,962,995	9.10%
2013	\$4,093,265	5,781,408	9.40%
2014	\$4,248,812	5,907,824.18	6.80%
2015	\$4,889,416	6,804,641.42	5.20%
2016	\$4,229,041	5,805,872.31	4.80%
2017	\$4,464,982	5,980,276.34	5.10%
2018	\$5,093,997	6,684,361.82	5.10%
2019	\$5,051,639	6,527,522.28	5.80%
2020	\$5,072,579	6,395,550.14	5.30%
2021	\$4,880,869	6,068,890.08	5.30%
2022	\$5,130,443	5,935,261.31	5.00%
2023	\$6,228,973	6,772,022.35	6.10%
Source	General Fund Spending by Major Area	bls.gov	MN Compass

Minnesota must increase healthcare spending now. By investing more resources, we will lower uninsured rates and ensure every citizen receives essential care.

PreK-12 Education Spending vs. ACT Score in MN

Oliver L. (64B), Ben C. (67A), Ethan M. (65A), and Hughes M. (64A)

Over the past few years, Minnesota has invested significantly more in PreK-12 schools, with larger budgets and higher expectations for student learning. But even with all that funding, many students aren’t meeting the grade-level expectations and important measures. 10 year old Leo Rossi struggles in his 4th-grade classroom as special support staff and funding are cut. His school lost a special education paraprofessional, similar to other schools that cannot afford individualized attention. Leo struggles with reading and writing, falling further behind every day without specialized help. It's challenging for him to ask for help because his teacher is overwhelmed by the large number of students and the limited resources. This makes I many parents and teachers feel frustrated because they “want the extra money to really support the students to succeed, not just pay for programs that don’t help them.” Without the right support early on, students often struggle in later years. This can lead to lower ACT scores, which limits their opportunities both during and after college.



We are studying the relationship between Minnesota state education funding and ACT scores. We gathered our data and information from various websites like the Department of Education, Minnesota Reformer, and NCES (National Center for Education Statistics). Our graph represents ACT scores and K-12 spending; the blue line represents K-12 spending over the years, and the red line represents the average ACT score in Minnesota. While K-12 funding has remained at roughly the same level, the average ACT score has dipped slightly, dropping from 21.3 to 20.7 over the past six years.

We are asking for an increase in education funding because higher investment typically leads to improved ACT scores. When ACT scores rise, college enrollment increases; subsequently, a more educated workforce results in higher-earning individuals who contribute more to the state’s tax base. Ultimately, this leads to higher employment rates and increased state revenue.

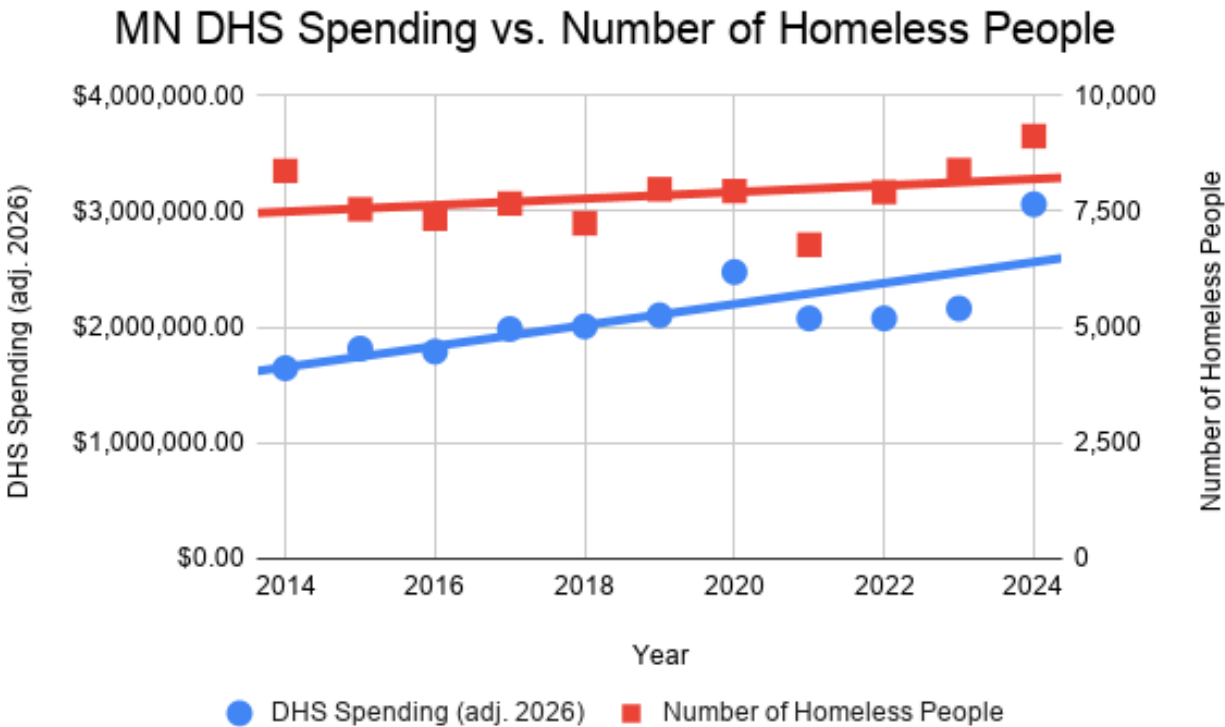
Year	PreK-12 Spending (act.)	PreK-12 Spending (adj. 2026)	Average ACT Scores in MN
2018	\$9,233,048	\$12,115,639	21.3
2019	\$9,587,881	\$12,389,069	21.4
2020	\$9,835,739	\$12,400,982	21.3
2021	\$9,919,135	\$12,333,488	21.6
2022	\$9,960,012	\$11,522,450	21.0
2023	\$11,093,620	\$11,093,620	20.8
2024	\$11,969,194	\$12,622,530	20.7
Source:	General Fund Spending by Major Area	bls.gov	AECF Data Center

We ask you to spend more money on funding for PreK-12 education because it will raise ACT scores and prepare students for life.

MN DHS Spending vs. Number of Homeless People

Clara B. (64A), Fuji T. (65A), and Rocio H. (65B)

Jane became homeless because her mother lost their housing. She was raised in a town that had alcohol, drugs, abuse, and neglect. She spent two decades on and off the streets while struggling with substance use disorder. In 2017, she had been diagnosed with a heart condition called endocarditis, which inflamed her heart from bacteria and substances. People usually get endocarditis at the age of 60 and older, but she had been diagnosed at around 30 years old. She had to spend months in the hospital. After Jane left the hospital, she had to do a 30-day treatment with other women who used drugs. Besides all of the challenges, Jane was able to recover from her opioid use disorder. Even though Jane got help, people are still struggling on the streets with substance addiction and are unable to get help. They don't always have the resources or support to get better.



We are studying the correlation between spending from the Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) and its impact on the number of homeless individuals. We gathered our data from the General Fund Spending in Major Areas, an inflation-adjusted calculator, the Bureau of Labor Statistics, and various university and government websites. It can be that over time the spending on DHS is increasing. During this same time, the homeless rate is also increasing. Upon reviewing the graph, it is clear that we are not spending enough to effectively lower the homeless rate.

Overall, as the homelessness rate is increasing, the spending from the Department of Human Services (DHS) also increases. If we want the homeless rates to lower, we have to support them to get the help they need. Every dollar invested by the DHS is returned for a \$3-4 of revenue from monetary recoveries, fines, and savings yields. And because of Jane's story it has inspired others to get the help they need.

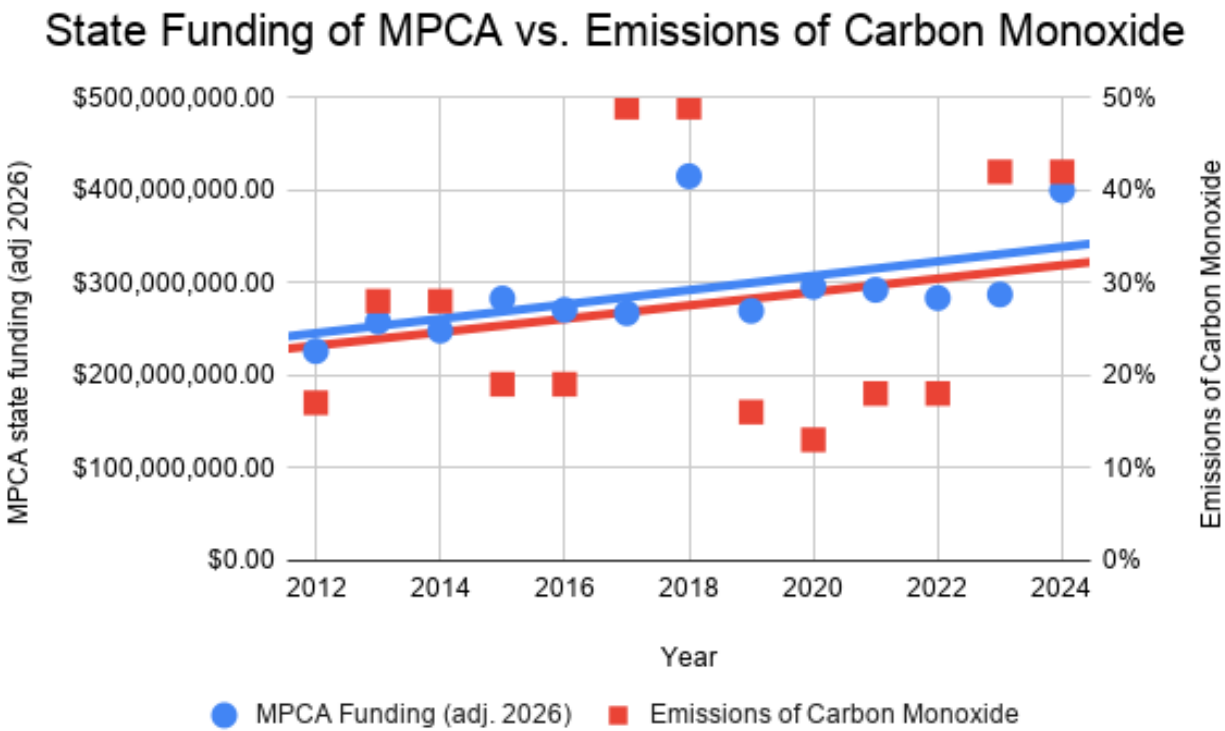
Year	DHS Spending (act.)	DHS Spending (adj. 2026)	Homeless Count
2014	\$1,181,078	\$1,642,248	8,377
2015	\$1,301,626	\$1,811,484	7,546
2016	\$1,372,120	\$1,883,726	7,341
2017	\$1,479,023	\$1,980,963	7,668
2018	\$1,527,624	\$2,004,554	7,243
2019	\$1,624,958	\$2,099,705	7,977
2020	\$1,962,788	\$2,474,700	7,940
2021	\$1,730,166	\$2,151,295	6,775
2022	\$1,792,129	\$2,073,262	7,917
2023	\$1,985,770	\$2,158,892	8,393
2024	\$2,902,907	\$3,061,363	9,182
Source	General Fund Spending by Major Area	bls.gov	PIT Study

Homeless rates in Minnesota are increasing, let's increase our support to give them the help they need to get back on their feet.

State Funding of MPCA vs. Emissions of Carbon Monoxide

Xio S. (64B), Charlotte S. (66B), Anna F. (64B), and Ollie G. (66B)

Air pollution has affected thousands of people worldwide, and Minnesota is no exception. Air pollution can affect anyone, but seniors, young children, and people with asthma, are especially vulnerable to health problems caused by air pollution. Zhara Darnell Dooley, who grew up in the Rondo community of St. Paul, has been severely affected by air pollution. Zhara has asthma, so she has to be very cautious about the air she is breathing. If she gets exposed to harmful air, she could have an asthma attack. “The only way I can describe it is if you're in a pool, and the water is up to your neck and you’re trying to breathe, but there’s pressure on your neck,” she said. Sometimes, her asthma attacks are so bad, she ends up in the hospital. Zhara is doing better now because she has an inhaler, but she still gets asthma attacks. It’s been terrifying for Zhara, and it needs to change. We are responsible for polluting the air, so we should be responsible for cleaning it up.



We are studying state funding of MPCA (Minnesota Pollution Control Agency) and the emissions of carbon monoxide. We found this information through the MPCAs budget report, and a report on carbon levels from the PCA (Pollution Control Agency). Our blue line shows how much MPCA is being funded more and more each year. Our red line shows that pollution is going up every year. These lines show that funding for MPCA is working but we need to fund it more so that pollution goes down. For the last two years on our graph the emissions have spiked up to 40%. Those two dots cause the line to increase so we should fund the MPCA more so the line goes down.

We are asking you to invest in programs that strive to reduce air pollution and policies that stop the emissions of greenhouse gasses. Improving air quality can help lower healthcare costs, make people more productive, and even make people live longer. Most scientists estimate that for every dollar spent on pollution control in the US, it can return around \$30.

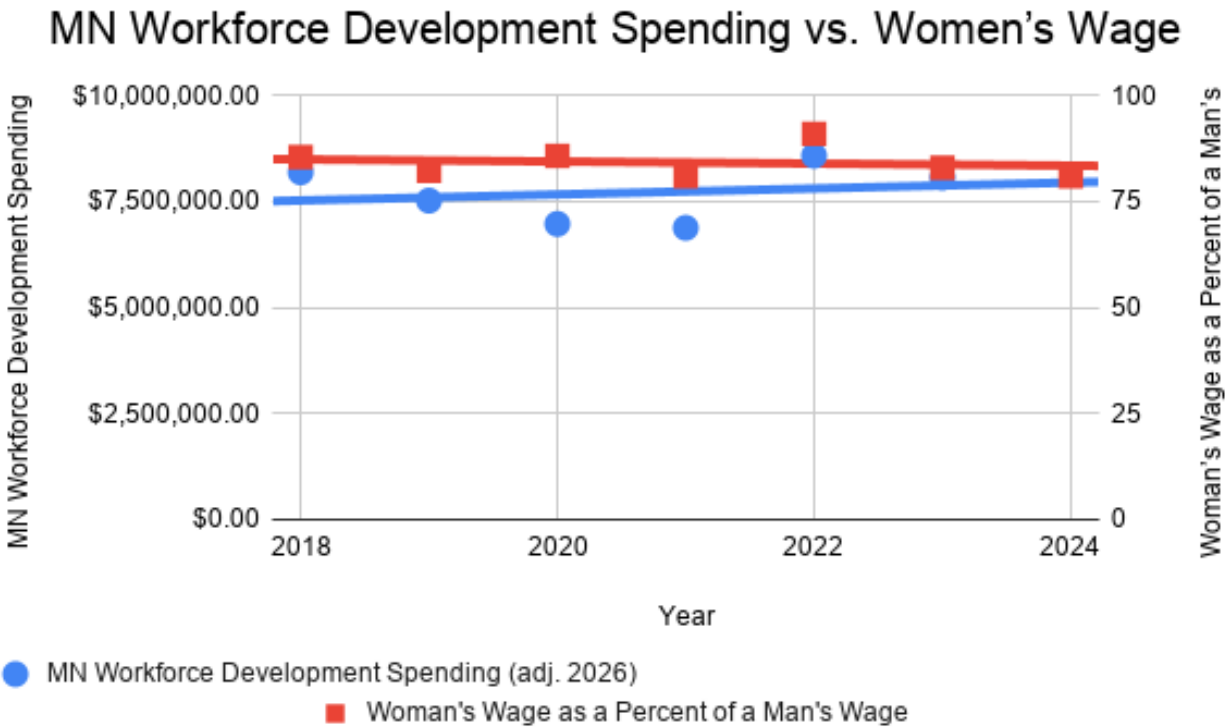
Year	MPCA Funding (act.)	MPCA Funding (adj. 2026)	Carbon Monoxide 8 hour percent of lowest standard
2012	\$159,501,000	\$225,955,466	17%
2013	\$184,736,000	\$257,926,370	28%
2014	\$180,566,000	\$248,079,940	28%
2015	\$206,140,000	\$282,880,330	19%
2016	\$199,598,000	\$270,490,647	19%
2017	\$201,238,000	\$267,024,567	49%
2018	\$320,528,000	\$415,171,115	49%
2019	\$211,865,000	\$269,538,933	16%
2020	\$234,510,000	\$295,672,200	13%
2021	\$235,033,000	\$292,220,880	18%
2022	\$245,003,000	\$283,436,890	18%
2023	\$269,066,000	\$287,212,603	42%
2024	\$385,644,000	\$399,859,358	42%
Source	Governor's Authorized Budgets	bls.gov	Pollution Control Agency

Air pollution is a very serious problem and we need to stop it by stopping carbon emissions and finding eco-friendly solutions.

MN Workforce Development Spending vs. Women’s Wage

Sally K. (66B), Finnley F. (64A), and Lydia M. (67B)

Hundreds of women in Minnesota struggle with subminimum wage, one of them being Tsering. Tsering worked at a sheltered workshop, but wasn't making enough money to support herself or the goals she was trying to reach. A few of her goals were to move out of her parents house and to get a job that pays at least minimum wage. Tsering decided that she had had enough with her low paying job. She quit, and started looking for one with better pay. Community Involvement Programs Supported Employment Services started helping her find a job that had a better income and steady work hours. These workforce development programs helped her reach an employment consultant who helped her find her skills and interests which would later on help her find a job. A few months later Tsering got an offer to work at Hampton Inn and took it. Now she works there as a public area inspector and said she is happier than ever. This relates to our graph as it shows with the help of Workforce Development spending, we can increase the average woman’s wage to meet the percentage of the average man’s.



We are studying the correlation between workforce development spending in Minnesota and how it compares to women's wage. We collected this information through the U.S Bureau of Labor Statistics. The blue line shows the amount of spending going into workforce development and the red line shows the average woman’s wage in Minnesota as the percentage of the average man’s wage. While small amounts of workforce development spending have increased, it has not been enough to make a clear difference in mending the wage gap. As you can see, the graph has shown little change being made since 2018. This has resulted in women continuing to only make about 80% of what a man would make for every dollar. In order to close this gap, a significant increase in workforce development spending has to be made.

The Institute for Women’s Policy Research has reported that in Minnesota, 6.9% of women live in poverty. By giving women equal pay in Minnesota, it is said that the poverty rate for women would decrease to 3.4% while also increasing the annual state GDP by over 3%. This is positive because by increasing women’s wages, not only would over 50% of women living in poverty find sustainability, but the state’s GDP would also be greatly benefited. Workforce Development is the key solution to equal pay in Minnesota.

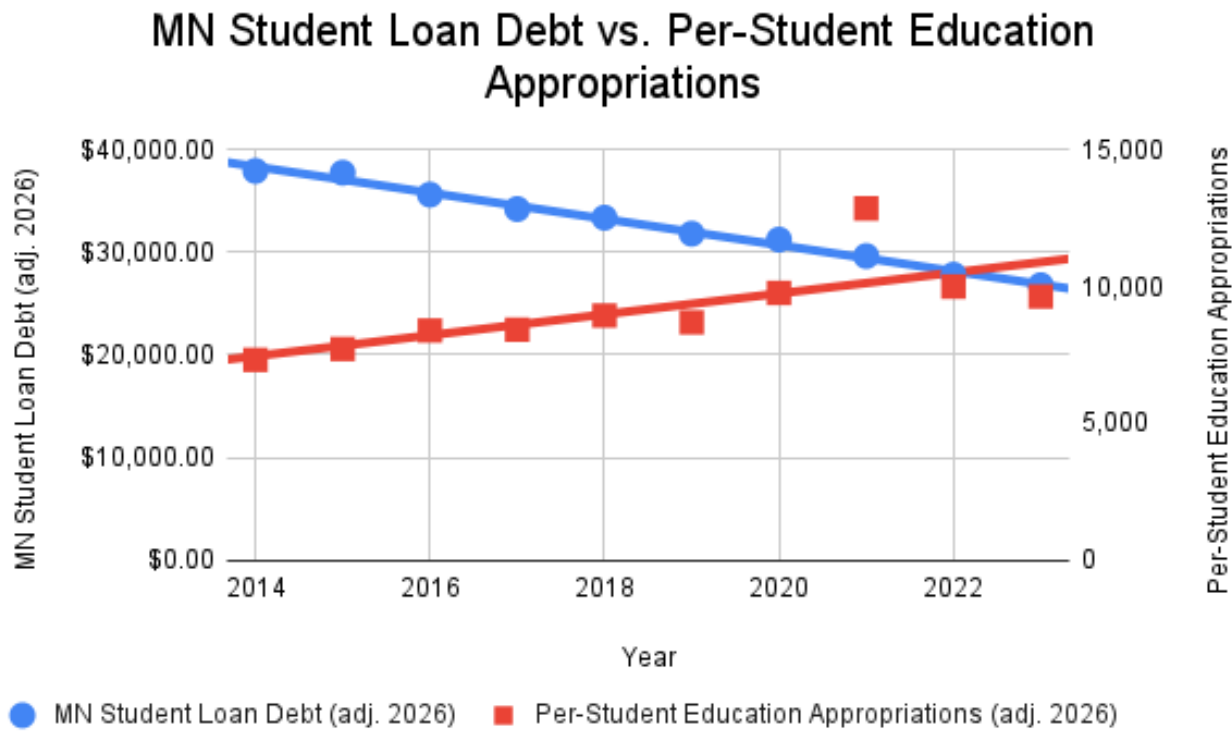
Year	MN Workforce Development Spending (act.)	MN Workforce Development Spending (adj. 2026)	Women's Wage as a percent of Man's Wage
2018	\$6,243,000	\$8,192,087.84	85.5
2019	\$5,821,000	\$7,521,659.25	82.3
2020	\$5,529,000	\$6,971,009.59	85.8
2021	\$5,532,000	\$6,878,508.70	81.0
2022	\$7,420,000	\$8,583,983.67	91.0
2023	\$7,421,000	\$8,067,971.70	83.0
2024	\$149,378,000	\$154,884,274.73	81.0
Source	Governor's Authorized Budget	bls.gov	U.S Bureau of Labor Statistics

Workforce Development spending needs to increase in order to bridge the unjustified gap between women’s wages and men’s wages.

MN Student Loan Debt vs. Per-Student Education Appropriations

Melita A. (64A), Isabel B. (64A), Junia G. (64B), and Rain T. (64B)

At Open World Learning, many teachers have experienced debt from college. Kenny Nguyen is one of many whose life has been dragged down by increasingly high tuition rates. After getting a masters from St. Thomas, he graduated with a total of \$12,000 in debt, even after various scholarships. It took him 3 years of paying back his student loans to become debt free. Kenny was lucky enough to only have to take out subsidized loans, but others haven't been so fortunate, leaving them with crippling interest from their loans. He would've been in much more debt if it weren't for his Pell Grant that paid for the total of his masters program. His story is one with a happy ending but there are countless others whose ambitions have been crushed by the system. He has benefited from the efforts of many legislators. We must keep the student loan debt numbers down to preserve our country's youth.



We researched the correlation between the amount of average Minnesotan student loan debt vs. the money the government forgave for debt, also known as per student education appropriations. This shows how the government is helping with student debt and if it's working. We obtained our data on student loan debt from the MN Office of Higher Education, through the years of 2014 to 2023. We also used State Higher Education Finance (SHEF) which gave the data points for per-student education appropriation, within the same timeframe. The blue line shows the student loan debt is steadily going down, while the red line shows the per-student education appropriations are going up. This data shows us that the education appropriations are helping students pay back their debt.

We think that the government should keep giving money for forgiving student loan debt, because we can see that it's helping. This is important because of the negative impacts student loan debt has on students, and how it can take them years to pay off their debt. The ROI, return on investment, is 10% to 13%, that means that for every dollar the government forgives in student loans; they gain 10-13 cents according to the Peter G. Peterson Foundation.

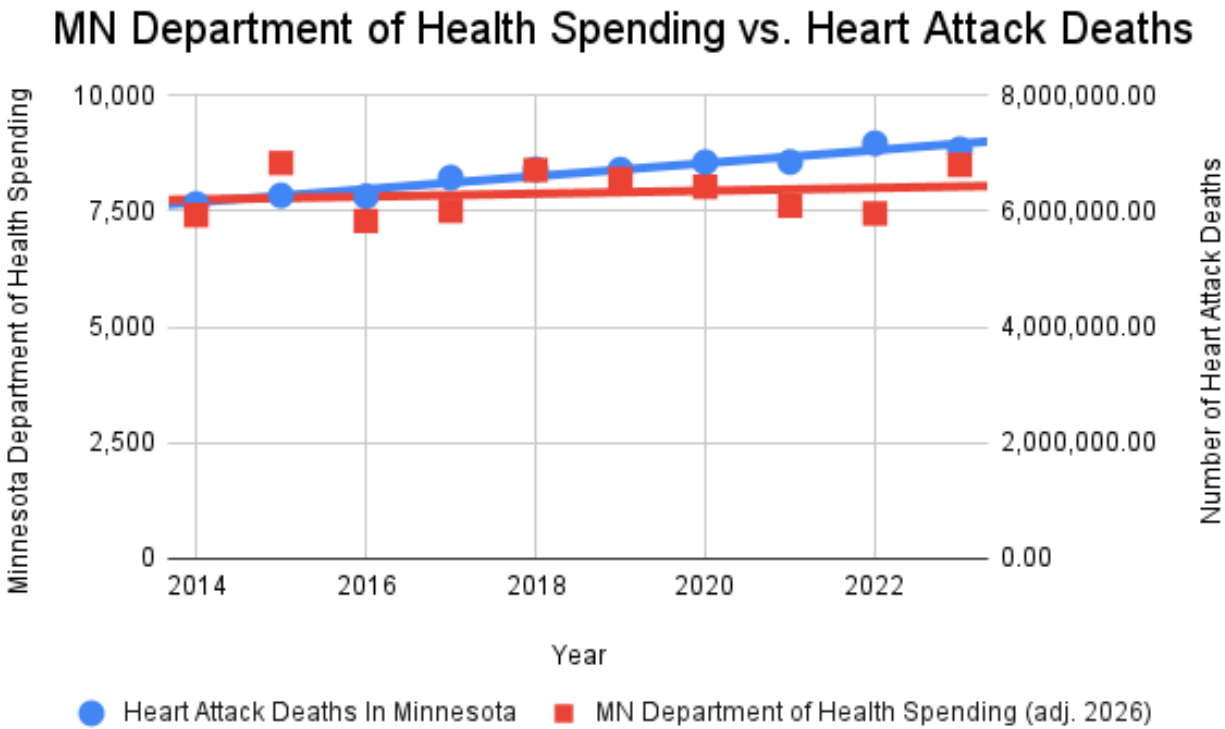
Year	MN Student Dept Loan (act.)	MN Student Dept Loan (adj. 2026)	Per-Student Education Appropriations (act.)	Per-Student Education Appropriations (adj. 2026)
2014	\$27,304	\$37,965	\$5,265	\$7,321
2015	\$27,156	\$37,793	\$5,546	\$7,718
2016	\$25,969	\$35,652	\$6,116	\$8,396
2017	\$25,568	\$34,245	\$6,290	\$8,425
2018	\$25,453	\$33,400	\$6,818	\$8,425
2019	\$24,453	\$31,840	\$6,731	\$8,697
2020	\$24,793	\$31,259	\$7,751	\$9,772
2021	\$23,852	\$29,658	\$10,349	\$12,868
2022	\$24,064	\$27,837	\$8,650	\$10,006
2023	\$24,663	\$26,813	\$8,868	\$9,641
Source	MN Office Of Higher Education	bls.gov	SHEF (State Higher Education Finance)	bls.gov

Student loan debt is a big problem. The government should keep helping pay off student loan debt to lower debt rates further.

MN Department of Health Spending vs. Heart Attack Deaths

Ciaran S. (66A), Theo M. (66B), Otis O. (64A), and Xavier L. (65A)

In 2022 at the age of 18, a Minnesota boy named Zachary Leight had started feeling sick with vomiting and disorientation. After two days his mother Terra was driving him to an urgent care center in New Brighton, when his eyes rolled back and his fingers curled. Terra called 911 and performed CPR in an attempt to save him. When the paramedics arrived they took him to Children’s Minnesota where a medical team there worked to try to save him. One hour later he was announced dead of cardiac arrest. With increased medical funding Zachary could have been saved if he got more frequent doctor office visits or better treatment.



We are studying the relationship between healthcare spending in Minnesota and heart attack deaths. We got our data for the number of heart attack deaths from the Center for Disease Control Minnesota Healthcare spending we used the General Fund Spending by Major Area. Our graph shows that the number of heart attack deaths are going up as the Minnesota Department of Health spending increases.

If self-measured blood tests were issued the return on investment would equal \$7.50 to \$19.34 for every one dollar spent over the next 10 years. If 36 million dollars are spent on at home blood tests, we can expect a return of between 270 million and 696 million dollars.

Year	MN Health Spending (act.)	MN Health Spending (adj. 2026)	Heart Attack Deaths In Minnesota
2014	\$4,248,812	\$5,935,669	7,659
2015	\$4,889,416	\$6,836,714	7,844
2016	\$4,229,041	\$5,833,237	7,825
2017	\$4,464,982	\$6,008,463	8,230
2018	\$5,093,997	\$6,715,867	8,408
2019	\$5,051,639	\$6,558,288	8,401
2020	\$5,072,579	\$6,425,694	8,562
2021	\$4,880,869	\$6,097,494	8,568
2022	\$5,130,443	\$5,963,236	8,972
2023	\$6,228,973	\$6,803,941	8,843
Source	General Fund Spending by Major Area	bls.gov	CDC.gov

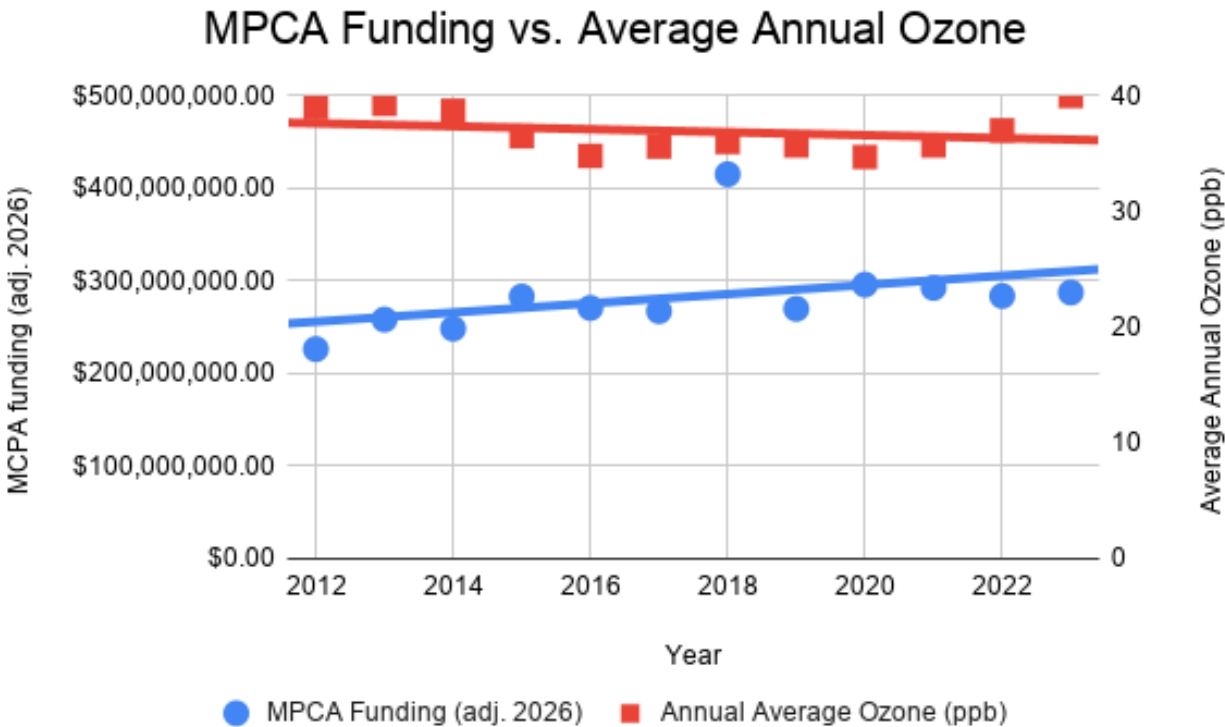
It is essential to increase the health budget to increase life expectancy and strengthen the workforce, helping people lead healthier, happier lives.

Group 10

MPCA Funding vs. Annual Average Ozone

Gideon P. (67B), Liam T. (66B), and Quinten T. (65B)

At the age of 16, the son of Cassandra Holmes died due to unexpected heart and lung problems. A heart transplant was required, but he didn't make it. With many unexpected deaths in south Minneapolis, asthma attacks have become too much of a problem. Those who live in more industrial areas end up suffering severe damage to the lungs, and in some cases can require a visit to the emergency room, or even death.



We are studying the effects of air pollution and MPCA funding. We've noticed that the average ozone has gone down with every \$100,000 that goes to air pollution monitoring and cleaning. Funding is going up but in recent years the average ozone is still going up. We need to keep up with MCPA funding or Minnesota won't be able to compete against the devastating pollution from the rise of Canadian wild fires, artificial intelligence, and recent conflicts.

We ask you to acknowledge the air pollution that is happening in Minnesota. Many people have died from asthma attacks or heart disease caused by air pollution. If this situation is focused on even a little more, it could have huge results. Hospitals will have to spend way less on transplants and lung checkups. In 2015 alone, Minnesota suffered 40,065 deaths caused by air pollution. Air is important, and we need it to stay clean so people can be safe, and save money to decrease healthcare costs.

Year	MPCA Funding (Actual)	MPCA Funding (adj. 2026)	Annual Average Ozone (ppb)
2012	\$159,501,000	\$225,955,466	39.0
2013	\$184,736,000	\$257,926,370	39.3
2014	\$180,566,000	\$248,079,940	38.7
2015	\$206,140,000	\$282,880,330	36.5
2016	\$199,598,000	\$270,490,647	34.8
2017	\$201,238,000	\$267,024,567	35.6
2018	\$320,528,000	\$415,171,115	36.0
2019	\$211,865,000	\$269,538,933	35.7
2020	\$234,510,000	\$295,672,200	34.7
2021	\$235,033,000	\$292,220,880	35.7
2022	\$245,003,000	\$283,436,890	37.0
2023	\$269,066,000	\$287,212,603	40.0
Source	Governor's Authorized Budgets	bls.gov	MN Department of Health Ozone Measurements

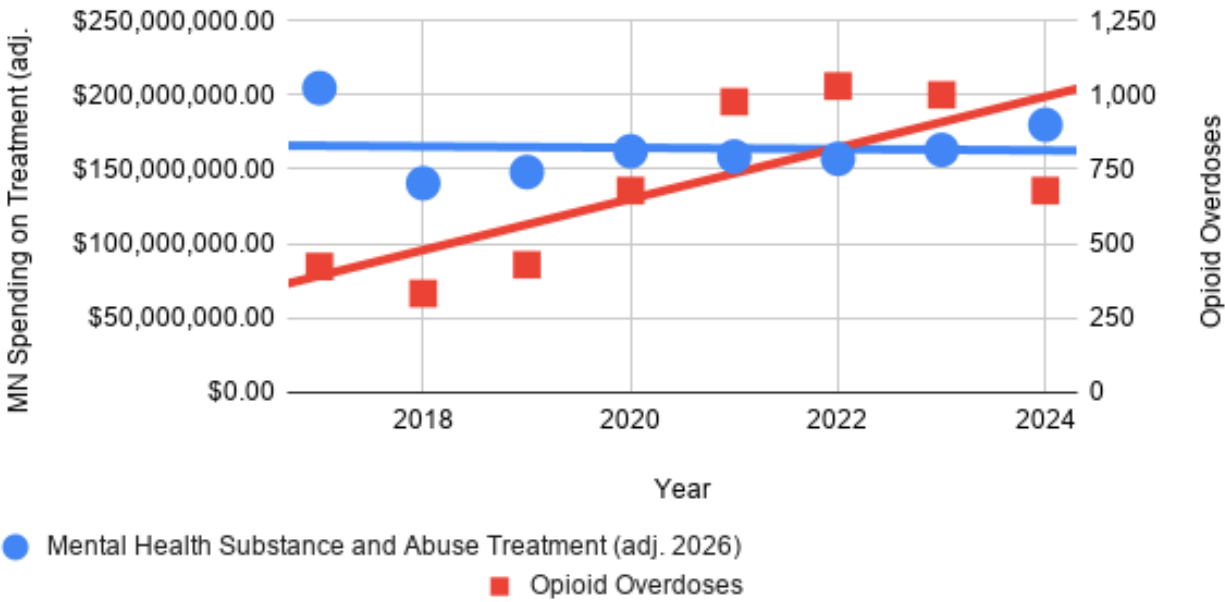
Air pollution has caused asthma, heart attacks, and death for our state. If we don't do something now, it'll only get worse.

MN Spending on Mental Health and Substance Abuse Treatment vs. Opioid Overdoses

Sylas G. (65A), Jacoby O. (64B), Momodu F. (65A), and Thomas S. (67B)

In Rochester Minnesota a boy named Caleb Malek arrived at the doors of Zumbro Valley Health Detox Centers. He had been brought there by staff at his sober home after testing positive for the opioid Fentanyl. Seven hours later Malek was pronounced dead due to workers failing to perform CPR and not knowing how to use Narcan to fight the overdose. Caleb attended Northfield High School and graduated with the class of 2016. He was a very talented baseball player. Baseball was his passion and his talents were noticed and he even earned himself a scholarship to Iowa Western Community College but unfortunately due to the incompetence of the workers at Zumbro Valley Health Center Caleb Malek has passed away.

MN Spending on Mental Health Substance Abuse Treatment vs. Opioid Overdoses



We are studying the correlation between the state of Minnesota's spending on mental health substance abuse treatment and opioid overdoses. We got our spending data from the Minnesota management and budget. And we got our opioid overdose data from the Minnesota department of health. Our red line shows the number of overdoses and our blue line shows the amount of money being spent on Mental Health and substance abuse treatment in Minnesota. The combination of our lines show that if the state of Minnesota spends more money on Mental Health substance abuse treatment the amount of opioid overdoses go down.

We are asking policy makers to increase spending on training and facilities to help support Minnesotans struggling with mental health and substance abuse in Minnesota. In hopes to lower the number of opioid overdoses.

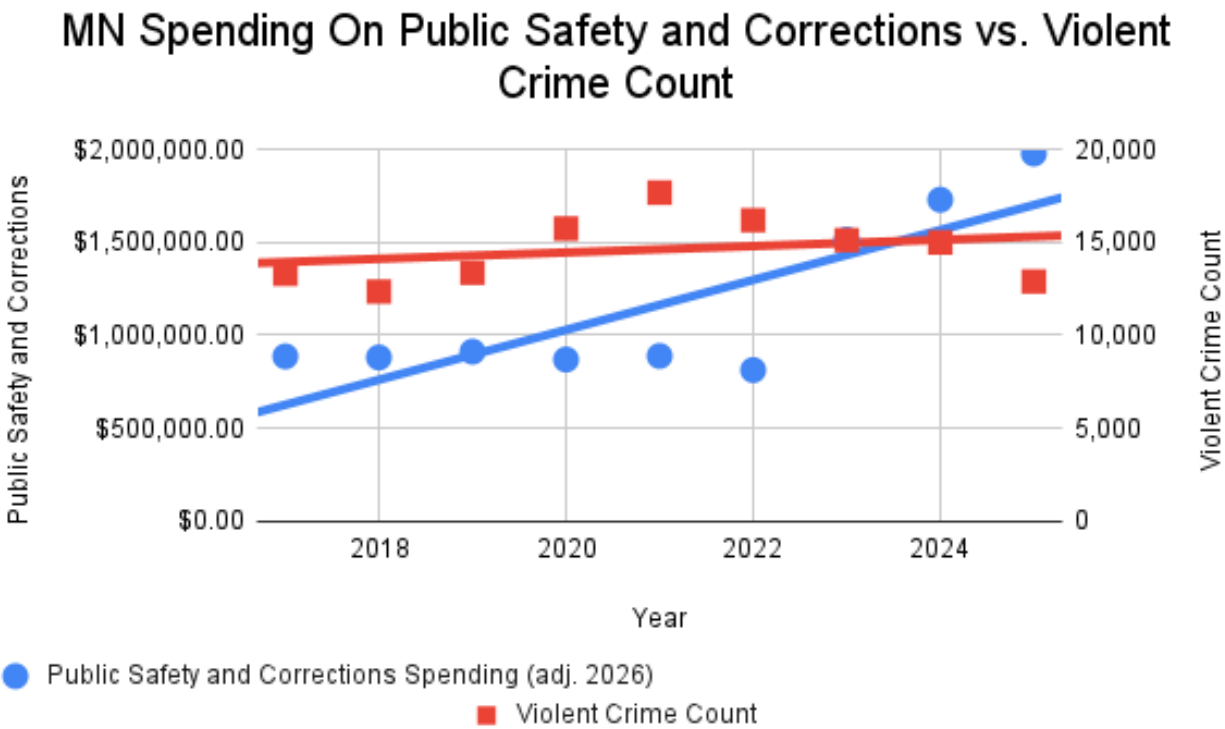
Year	Mental Health and Substance Abuse Treatment (act.)	Mental Health and Substance Abuse Treatment (adj. 2026)	Opioid Overdoses
2017	152,907,000	204,799,500	422
2018	107,141,000	140,590,800	331
2019	114,659,000	148,157,680	428
2020	128,646,000	162,197,940	678
2021	127,591,000	158,647,100	978
2022	135,781,000	157,081,100	1031
2023	150,029,000	163,108,700	1001
2024	170,729,000	180,048,260	678
Sources	Governor's Authorized Budgets	bls.gov	CDC.gov

If the amount of overdoses go down in Minnesota the state will have a better economy and Minnesota will be safer all around.

MN Spending On Public Safety and Corrections vs. Violent Crime Count

Bennett M. (66B), Elliot C. (67B), Gavin T. (67B), and Gordon H. (64A)

In December 2022, two young men became victims of a shooting in downtown St. Paul. 18-year-old David Burton Johnson and 21-year-old Elijah Marquise Payne were rushed to the hospital after first responders found them suffering from fatal gunshot wounds. Despite the doctors efforts they could not save the two men. Sadly, both of them later died in the hospital.



We are studying the correlation between the spending on public safety and corrections and the violent crime count in Minnesota. We got our data from the crime statistics database. The circle line represents spending on public safety, and the square line represents the violent crime count compared to spending. The more money spent on public safety and corrections the less violent crimes per year. However, in the past years we notice that the spending has greatly increased. Over time the violent crime rate decreased by the thousands.

We want you to continue increasing the amount of money spent on public safety and corrections. We think that doing that the violent crime rates will continue to decrease as they have the past year. The Minnesota Department of Corrections estimates that every dollar spent on public safety and corrections has a \$4 dollar economic output.

Year	Public Safety and Corrections Spending (act.)	Public Safety and Corrections Spending (adj. 2026)	Violent Crime Count
2017	\$672,085	\$886,717	13,321
2018	\$680,538	\$881,040	12,366
2019	\$720,728	\$912,225	13,381
2020	\$696,470	\$869,677	15,766
2021	\$762,068	\$889,033	17,704
2022	\$741,856	\$812,980	16,217
2023	\$1,430,248	\$1,516,535	15,142
2024	\$1,680,712	\$1,732,086	15,015
2025	\$1,974,029	\$1,981,327	12,911
Source	General Fund Spending by Major Area	bls.gov	FBI Crime Data Explorer

We want you to continue increasing the money spent on public safety and corrections because we want less people dying from violent crimes.

MN SELF Loan Funding vs. College Student Debt

Mango N. (64A), Chester T. (44B), Arlo M. (65B), and Niko S. (65B)

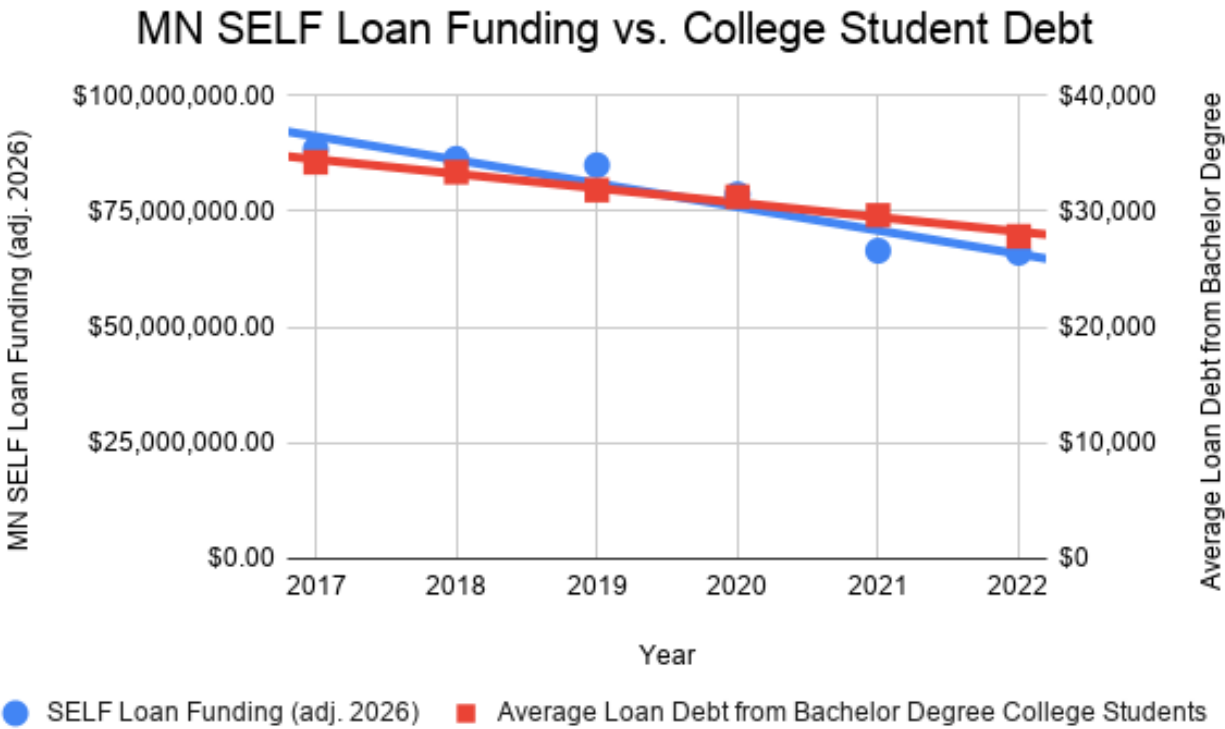
In 2023, the Supreme Court overturned a plan Joe Biden’s administration created to help student debts and loans. While the plan was enacted, many students believed that Ms. Lenarz debt would be forgiven, but after the Supreme Court overturned the plan, they were met with debt that could follow them their whole life. A student in Mankato, Minnesota called Ms. Lenarz was expecting to receive huge cuts to her debt, but was met with rejection and now has to pay a staggering debt of 70,000 US dollars. She will never be able to pay this off without government intervention.

We are studying SELF Loan Funding, a Minnesota loan program, and how student debt, focusing on bachelor degrees, relates to it. We got our data from the MN Office of Higher Education, which had all the data we needed. Our blue line data shows SELF Loan Funding, and the downward trend in the last few years. Our red line data shows the average bachelor degree student debt, and its downward trend in the last few years. The relationship shows how when SELF funding is lowered, student debt also drops.

Though our chart suggests the lowering amount of debt and loan funding, and while that is true, we suspect that with the new president and government initiatives, this won't stay for long. As you probably can guess, loan funding affects the economy significantly. In 2020, 5920 students received \$78,000,000 worth of SELF Loan Funding. With the average 160,000 dollar ROI on a bachelor's degree, that means for every dollar spent on the 5920 students, they on average earned \$12.

Year	SELF Loans Funding (act.)	SELF Loans Funding (adj. 2026)	Average Loan Debt from Bachelor Degree College Students (act.)	Average Loan Debt from Bachelor Degree College Students (adj. 2026)
2017	\$66,050,746	\$88,466,585	\$25,568	\$34,245
2018	\$65,818,464	\$86,367,233	\$25,453	\$33,400
2019	\$65,770,495	\$84,985,956	\$24,641	\$31,840
2020	\$62,399,605	\$78,673,945	\$24,793	\$31,259
2021	\$53,459,574	\$66,471,826	\$23,858	\$29,665
2022	\$57,071,529	\$66,024,403	\$24,062	\$27,836
Source	MN Office of Higher Ed	MN Office of Higher Ed	bls.gov	bls.gov

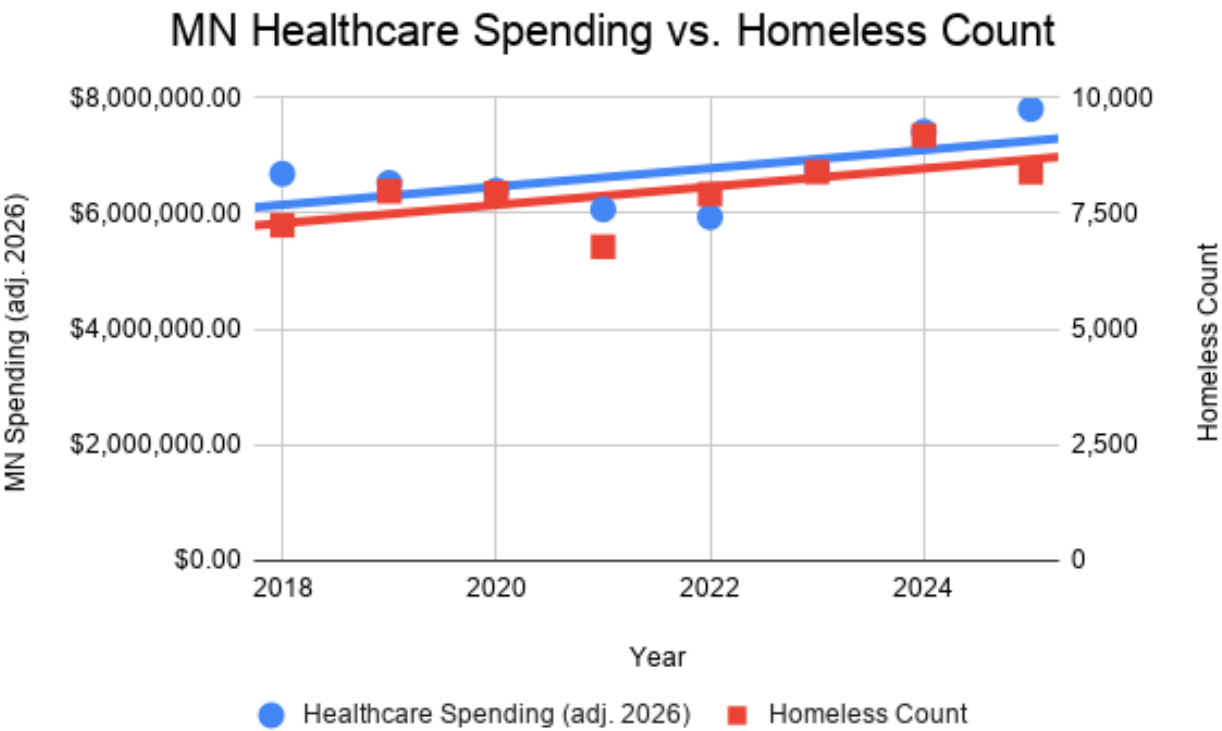
We need your help for this. College is a vital piece of education for many people, and it's hard to do with debt.



MN Healthcare Spending vs. Homeless Count

Nikolai L. (66B), Thaddeus H. (38A), Loudon B. (67B), and Halvor J. (66A)

Many people in Minnesota are suffering from homelessness, especially people who are in debt for one reason or another. People like Sandra Johnson struggle every day. Sandra is an older woman who lost her home in 2006, and her husband died as well. She became homeless due to funeral expenses, medical debt, and a mortgage, her funeral expenses were due to her mother dying in early 2006. Sandra lived with a lot of different people, moving in with her church family, then with her actual family, then in her car, until it was towed away. For the next six years Sandra was homeless. All of this because she lost her husband at a young age and had to pay medical debts from cancer and other chronic illnesses. If you choose to spend more money on healthcare, then we will see less cases like this and less unnecessary suffering in our city.



Our project is on healthcare spending and how it is affecting homelessness in Minnesota. Our first data set, in blue, was from the General Fund Spending Major Area, the second set, in data, in red we got from the Bureau of Labor Statistics. These two data sets were used for getting the necessary data for healthcare spending. The third data set was from the PIT Count which was where we got our homeless count. The data sets show that the more money spent on health care, the more the homelessness count goes up. But in the long run homelessness would go down. Healthcare spending isn't too good of a source for all of homelessness but if it was they would have lines going in opposite directions.

We are asking you to spend more money on healthcare. If we spend more money on healthcare, homelessness will go down and people will gain money. If you start now you will have to pay less on homelessness later. For example annually the average homeless person costs taxpayers \$35,578 while spending money on homelessness, will cost us around \$4,000 less. We think this is necessary because it will drive down the homeless count and there will be less suffering in the public.

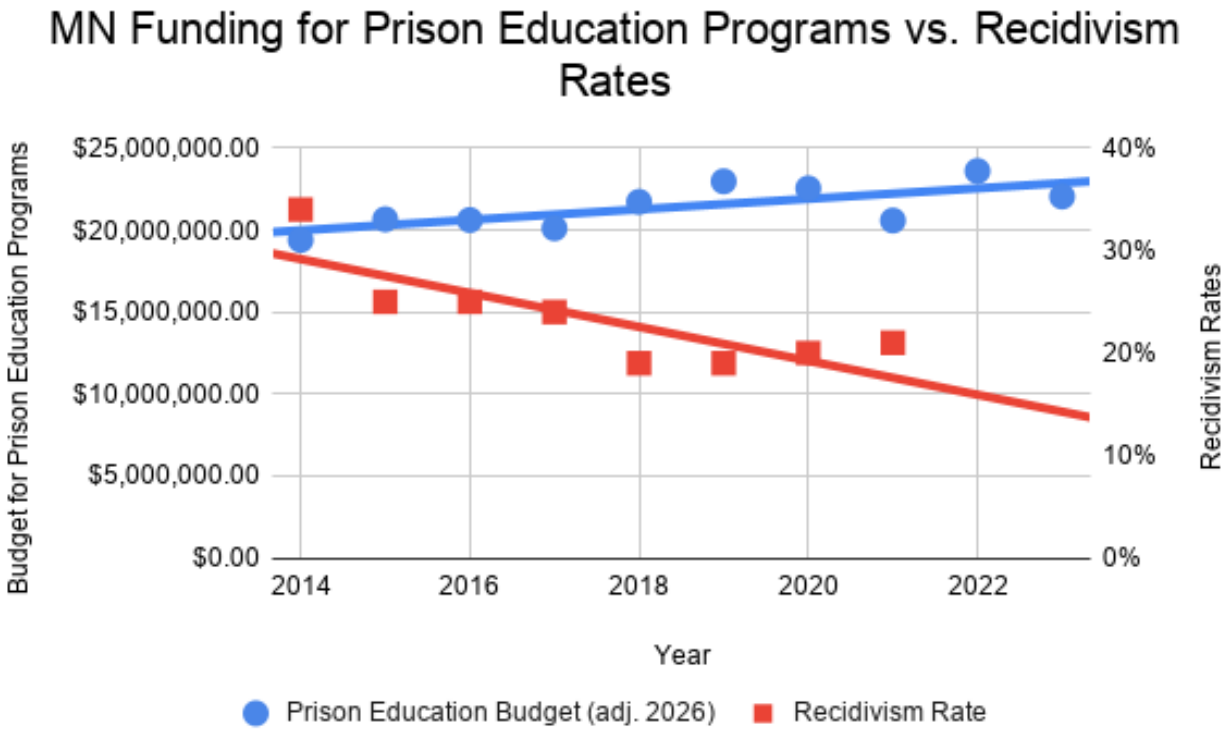
Year	Healthcare Spending (act.)	Healthcare Spending (adj. 2026)	Homeless Count
2018	\$5,093,997	\$6,684,362	7,243
2019	\$5,051,639	\$6,527,522	7,977
2020	\$5,072,570	\$6,395,539	7,940
2021	\$4,880,869	\$6,068,890	6,775
2022	\$5,130,443	\$5,935,261	7,917
2023	\$6,228,973	\$6,772,022	8,393
2024	\$7,031,410	\$7,415,221	9,182
2025	\$7,624,141	\$7,806,086	8,392
Source	General Fund Spending Major Area	bls.gov	PIT Count

If more money is allocated towards healthcare, homeless people will be more healthy, homelessness will decrease, and result in substantial annual savings to society.

MN Funding for Prison Education Programs vs. Recidivism Rates

Sebrena C. (65A), Zelda J. (64A), William S. (64B), and Greta C. (64A)

Jason Sole was a man whose childhood was filled with the war on drugs. He didn't have words for what he was experiencing. He was confused, angry, and had no way to express that. He felt that everything was against him. In 1997 he was convicted of firearm possession by 2005, he was given two separate drug possession charges. After being sent to prison, he was given an education while he was there. Jason chose to change himself for the better, and is now helping others do the same. He is a justice educator, married with kids, and an author. His life was changed in prison, and it is not wrong to say that he is in a good place because of the education he got.



We are studying the correlation between funding for prison education in Minnesota and recidivism rates. We gathered recidivism rate data from Department of Corrections performance reports and the budget data from the Governor's Budget. The blue line shows the lowering recidivism rates in Minnesota from 2014-2021 and The red line shows the rising budget for prison education programs. The data suggests that more spending for prison education leads to decreased recidivism rates. For example, in 2014 the budget was the lowest, and the recidivism rates were the highest. When the money increased, the recidivism rates decreased drastically.

We want to spend more money educating prisoners. We expect that if we give prisoners a better education, they will be able to get jobs they couldn't before, go to college, and not return to a life of crime. According to a report from the Education Commission, for every dollar spent educating prisoners, there's a \$4 to \$5 economic return. It's been proven that education programs increase rates of hope for prisoners. Many prisoners want to participate in these programs. According to the same study, 70% of the adult prisoners surveyed said they would like to enroll in a prison education program, but have been unable to due to low availability.

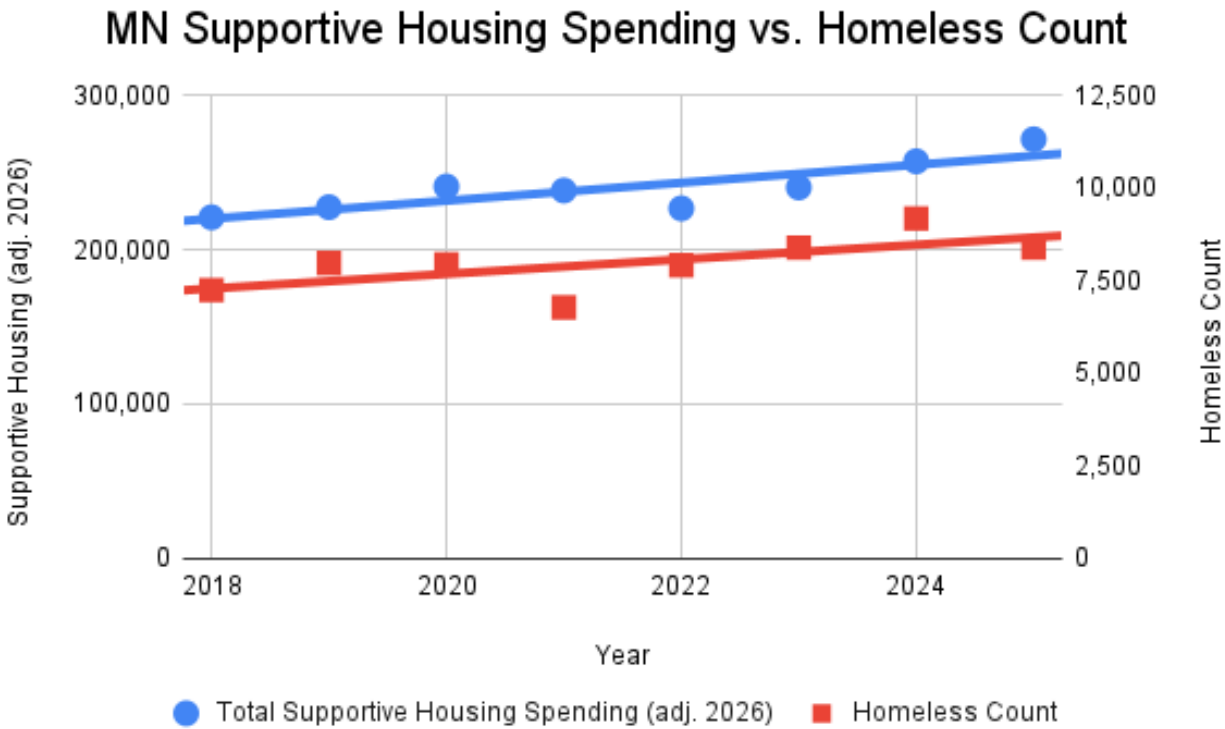
Year	Prison Education Allocation (act.)	Prison Education Allocation (adj. 2026)	Recidivism Rate
2014	\$13,950,000	\$19,396,990	34%
2015	\$14,842,000	\$20,655,740	25%
2016	\$15,014,000	\$20,612,090	25%
2017	\$15,015,000	\$20,109,000	24%
2018	\$16,552,000	\$21,719,600	19%
2019	\$17,779,000	\$22,973,300	19%
2020	\$17,878,000	\$22,540,730	20%
2021	\$16,553,000	\$20,582,060	21%
2022	\$20,402,000	\$23,602,480	
2023	\$20,279,000	\$22,046,950	
Source	Governor's Authorized Budgets	bls.gov	MN DOC

We can stop recidivism by educating prisoners. It helps a lot of people become upstanding Minnesotans and gives them opportunities for a better future.

MN Supportive Housing Spending vs. Homeless Count

Htoo M. (66B), Elizabeth B. (64B), Rosie W. (64A), and Patrick W. (64A)

Many people face homelessness in Minnesota, Betty Allen being one of them. But unlike most other homeless people, Betty’s life was turned around by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Betty was living in her car for four years with her dog, before heading to El Paso, Texas. She went to Texas during COVID-19 to care for her sick and dying elderly parents. Her parents were struggling to battle COVID-19, but lost. They both died within days of each other. After this sudden tragedy, Betty caught COVID-19 herself. She slowly climbed back to health as she headed back out to Minnesota. When Betty got to Minnesota she struggled to find housing again. However, she finally got an apartment with the help from social workers. Then the HUD paid \$980 of her \$1400 monthly rent.



We are studying homelessness vs. money spent towards supportive housing programs in Minnesota and how we want it to get better. We got our data from MN Management and the budget of Minnesota. The blue line shows total supportive housing spending (adj. 2026) and the red line shows Homeless count. This shows that we need to work on both total supportive housing spending and homeless count.

We wanted this graph to raise awareness of the large amount of homeless people in Minnesota. Even though the government spends thousands of dollars towards supportive housing, homeless numbers continue to increase. To decrease this we need to spend way more money on homelessness so the number of homeless people goes down. As you can see on the graph last year when we spent a little more, the homeless count went down, To decrease the homeless count more, we must spend a large amount of money towards supportive housing.

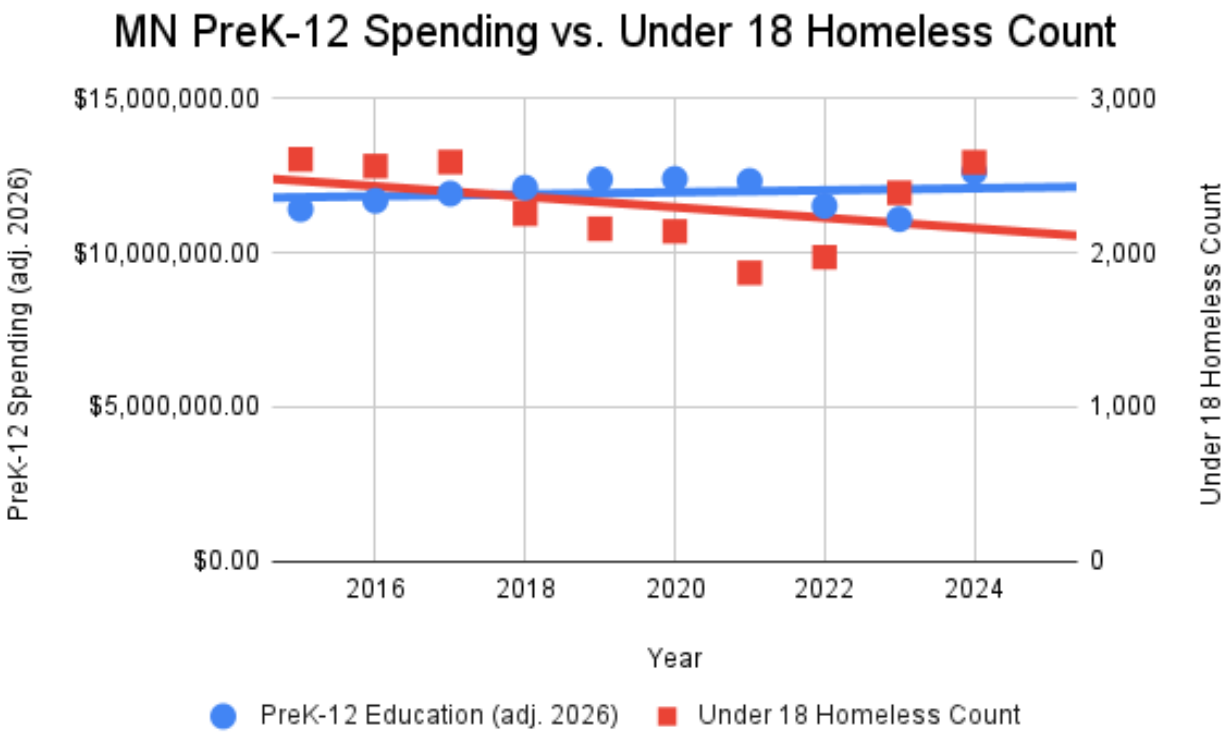
Year	Supportive Housing (act.)	Supportive Housing Grants (act.)	Total (act.)	Total (adj. 2026)	Homeless Count
2018	159,027	9,489	168,516	221,127	7,243
2019	166,696	9,531	176,227	227,713	7,977
2020	181,977	9,264	191,241	241,118	7,940
2021	181,213	10,634	191,847	238,543	6,775
2022	177,530	18,622	196,152	226,922	7,917
2023	201,877	19,364	221,241	240,529	8,393
2024	225,054	19,106	244,160	257,487	9,182
2025	253,418	12,014	265,432	271,766	8,392
Source	Governor's Authorized Budgets	Governor's Authorized Budgets	Governor's Authorized Budgets	bls.gov	PIT Study

Supportive Housing programs help homeless people stay in their homes. Allocate to your local program and you can help improve the lives of thousands.

MN PreK-12 Spending vs. Under 18 Homeless Count

Jack G. (66A) and Felix R. (64A)

Mila was a 16 year old girl who was homeless for several years, off and on. She lived with emotionally abusive parents; She would frequently get kicked out of her house and she had to find shelter or even sleep in the cold, dark night. Mila says that “It made it very hard for me to create and maintain growth and success in many different aspects of my life.” After a really bad fight with her parents, Mila ran away. She had to spend the night outside. A kind friend drove her to Hope House where she was finally able to find help. She arrived hungry and cold and was offered a shower, a sandwich, and a place to herself. Hope House is where staff empower young people who are struggling. With proper motivation, she then overcame her issues and challenges with proper education.



We want youth homelessness to go down and spending money on PreK-12 education will help homeless youth build homes for themselves.

We are studying the amount of money Minnesota spends on pre-k-12 education vs. the population of homeless people under 18 in Minnesota. We got most of our data from General Fund Spending by Major Area, bls.gov, and Point In Time count. The red line is the average under 18 homeless count from 2014 to 2024. The blue line is the average MN spending on PreK-12 education from 2015 to 2024. The data shows that when the blue line goes up, the red line goes down.

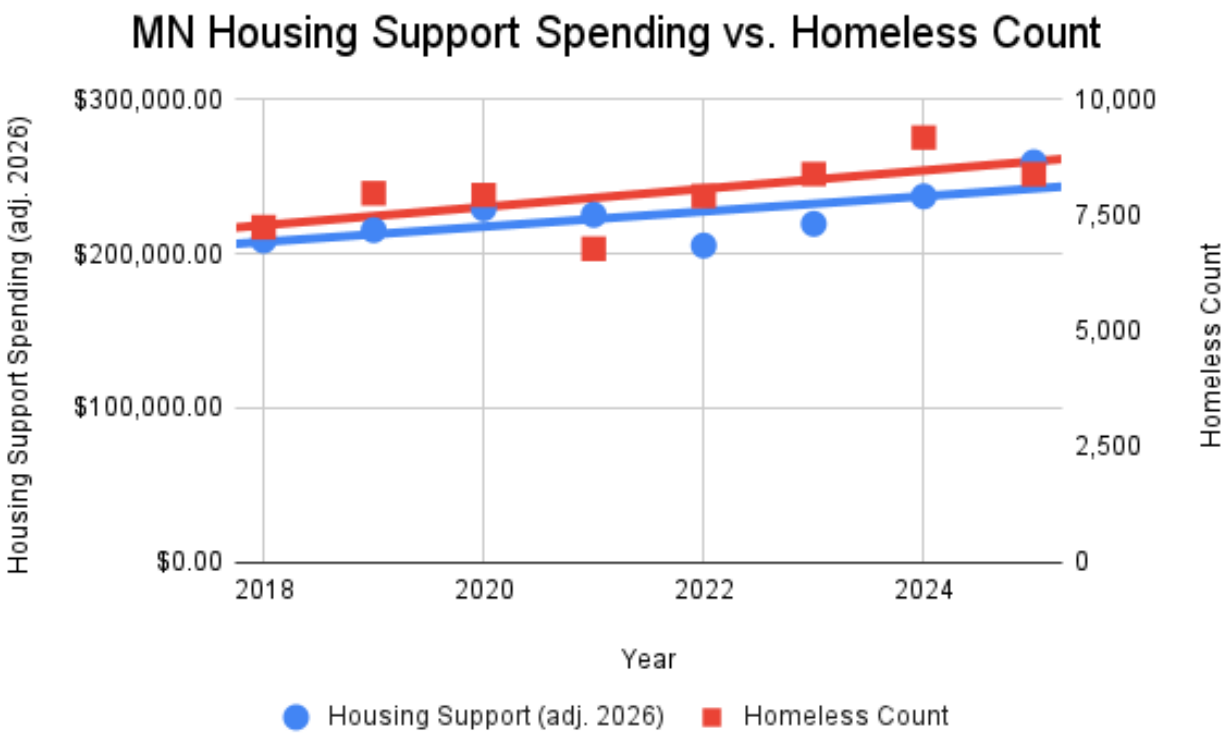
We want to increase spending in PreK-12 education so that we can lower the number of under 18 homeless people. Research shows that increased spending increases academic success, lowers absenteeism, and increases the chance to graduate. Additionally, research shows that graduating substantially decreases the likelihood that an adult will be homeless.

Year	Prek-12 Education Spending (actual)	Prek-12 Education Spending (adj. 2026)	Under 18 Homeless Count
2015	\$8,204,234	\$11,417,902	2607
2016	\$8,516,938	\$11,692,546	2563
2017	\$8,901,333	\$11,922,205	2590
2018	\$9,233,048	\$12,115,340	2254
2019	\$9,587,811	\$12,388,979	2157
2020	\$9,835,379	\$12,400,528	2140
2021	\$9,919,135	\$12,333,488	1870
2022	\$9,960,012	\$11,522,450	1972
2023	\$10,204,038	\$11,093,638	2390
2024	\$11,969,194	\$12,622,534	2588
Source	General Fund Spending by Major Area	bls.gov	PIT Count

MN Housing Support Spending vs. Homeless Count

Mavis C. (64A) Eleanor F. (64B), Bahati S. (67B), and Willa B. (64A)

After losing his home to financial difficulties, teenager Roy Lee Spearman Jones was offered a place to stay with his friend and friend’s grandmother, and he gratefully accepted. His mom wanted to move to Omaha, Nebraska but after moving 17 times he liked living in Minnesota, and wanted to stay here. When his mom told him she was cutting off his health insurance he moved in with her out of fear of his medical bills falling to his friend's grandmother. From there things only got worse for him. He was fighting so much with his mom he had no choice but to move back to Minnesota with his friend. After a few months he felt like too much of a burden and moved out. With nowhere to go, he ended up sleeping behind the garbage cans near his school before moving into a homeless shelter. He now has a job and is attending community college but doesn’t doubt he will end up homeless yet again.



We want the homeless rate to go down. One way to do that is for Minnesota to up its spending on housing support. Please vote for upping housing support.

Our project is about the state spending on housing support and homelessness rates in Minnesota. We got our data for the state spending from MN.gov general fund balance analysis from November 2025, and the homelessness rates from the PIT count. The blue line on our graph represents the money (2026. adj) the state is spending on housing support, which is going up. The red line represents the amount of homeless individuals per year in Minnesota, which is now going down since 2024. This graph currently has a positive correlation because we need to be spending a lot more money on housing support for it to make a bigger difference. Although it seems to not be helping, the homelessness counts have been going down since 2024, and dipped in 2021 as well. This benefits the state because it is cheaper for the state to help people stay in their own homes, than to have more homeless shelters, and find somewhere else for them to live.

Not only is investment in our cause morally intelligent, but it is also financially respectable. For every \$1 million the Public Housing Authorities spends on capital investments generates \$1.89 million in economic activity & supports 11 full-time jobs. Every \$1 million Public Housing Authorities spend on capital investments generates

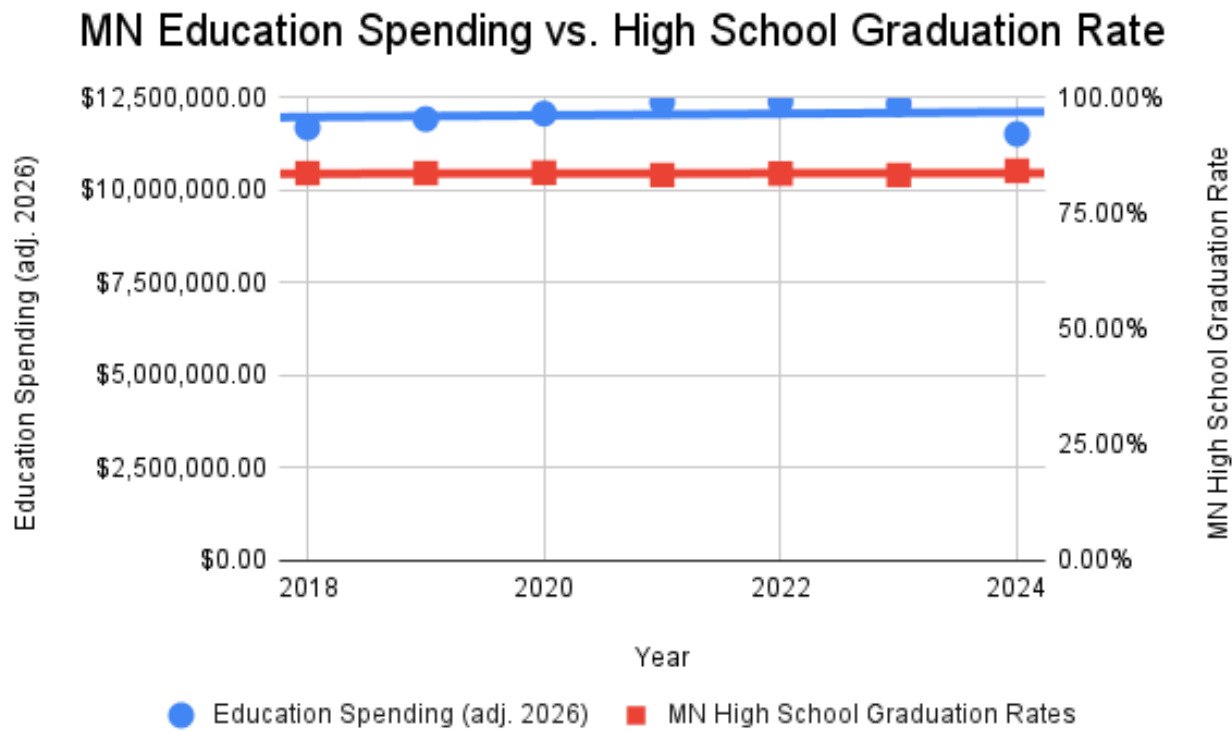
Supportive housing is beneficial in many ways, homeless people with supportive housing save an average of 6,000 a year on healthcare (per person) and have less emergency room visits (-33%), spend less time in the nursing home (-42%) and spend less days in the hospital (-23%). It also helps homeless people with children so the child doesn't have to go to foster care and be separated from their parents. Supportive housing has also been shown to improve mental and physical disability(s) along with reduced substance abuse.

Year	Housing Support (actual)	Housing Support (adj. Jan 2026)	Homeless Count
2018	\$159,027	\$208,676	7,243
2019	\$166,696	\$215,398	7,977
2020	\$181,977	\$229,438	7,940
2021	\$181,213	\$225,321	6,775
2022	\$177,530	\$205,379	7,917
2023	\$201,877	\$219,477	8,393
2024	\$225,054	\$237,339	9,182
2025	\$253,418	\$259,466	8,392
Source	Governor’s Authorized Budgets	bls.gov	PIT Study

MN Education Spending vs. High School Graduation Rate

Rajan A. (66A), James D. (44A), and Julio Y. (67A)

Imagine a boy who is trying to graduate high school. He immigrated from Mexico in search of a better education. His name is Adolfo Saldana-Lara, a Mexican immigrant who moved to America in search of a better education. But for Adolfo things look rough, as his brother is away, and none of his relatives have graduated high school yet. He feels a lot of pressure about graduating due to the struggles caused by his family's low income and lifestyle, but despite this, Adolfo manages to push through his struggles, graduating high school at 17 years old at Bloomington Kennedy High School.



Increasing funding for schools would help students like Adolfo, providing more resources to excel in school and live a successful life after high school.

We are studying the correlation between high school graduation and education spending in Minnesota. We found our information through the Minnesota Department of Education and the General Fund Spending by Major Area. The blue line shows the consistent rate of education spending in recent years. The red line shows that the high school graduation rate in percentages has been fairly stationary in recent years. When compared they show that when the educational spending goes up, Minnesota high school graduation rates do the same.

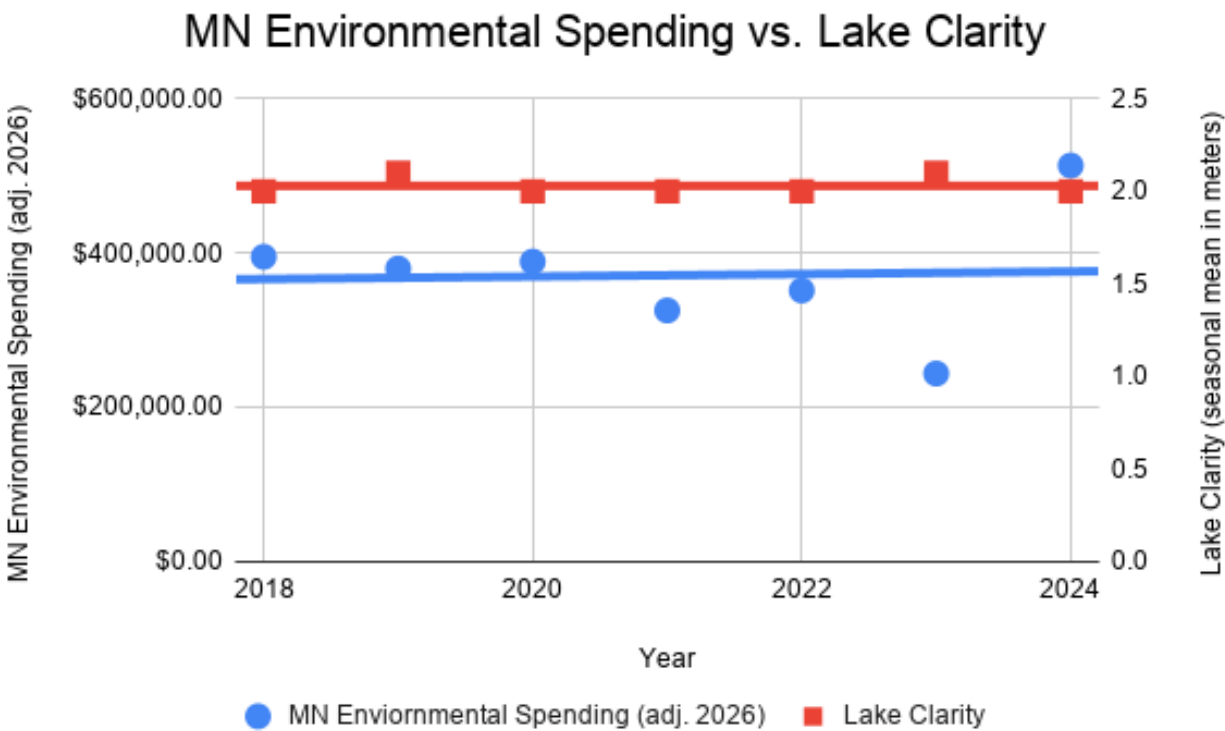
Bloomington Kennedy High School was not getting enough money, and did not have enough resources to support students struggling to get a high school diploma. If you, a part of the government of Minnesota, could help fund every high school with a fair sum of money it could allow other students like Adolfo to graduate and pursue their dreams. In order to sustain a healthy learning ground for high schoolers and a clean environment for each school, this would help tens of thousands of high schoolers going through the struggle towards graduation. Not only does graduating high school provide a great start to getting a job, it will open a wider variety of subjects in college that interest graduates.

Year	PreK-12 Education Spending (actual)	PreK-12 Education Spending (adj. 2026)	High School Graduation Rate
2018	\$9,233,048	\$12,071,014	83.70%
2019	\$9,587,811	\$12,388,979	83.70%
2020	\$9,835,739	\$12,400,982	83.80%
2021	\$9,919,135	\$12,333,488	83.30%
2022	\$9,960,012	\$11,522,450	83.60%
2023	\$10,204,038	\$11,093,638	83.30%
2024	\$11,969,194	\$12,622,535	84.20%
Source	General Fund Spending by Major Area	bls.gov	MDE

MN Environmental Spending vs. Lake Clarity

Edmund K. (64A), Declan P. (64B), Soren S. (66B), and Rafael H. (65A)

Jack Ariola Erenberg was a 9 year old aspiring hockey player who told his beloved mother he would build a house for her someday when he was strong enough. Sadly, he never got the chance as he died due to a brain-eating amoeba that went up his nose when he was swimming in Lily Lake. He left behind his four siblings and his two mourning parents. Jack would have been 23 today. Jack is not alone, there have been other cases of this happening in Minnesota. All of this could have been avoided if there had been consistent testing for these deadly threats. Jack could have been saved if there had been better testing and consistent funds allocated towards monitoring Minnesota's lakes.



Minnesota’s natural bodies of water should be more closely and consistently monitored for the betterment of our state’s health and wellness.

We are studying water clarity and how environmental spending can help keep better track of it. We got our data from the University of Minnesota, designed to look at certain environmental metrics about lakes. The metric we used was the seasonal mean of lake clarity for the whole state. The first line with the blue circles shows that the environmental spending in Minnesota has spiked in recent years. The second line with the red squares shows that the seasonal mean of lake clarity has been fairly stable throughout our data set. Our two lines together show that environmental spending can affect the lake's clarity. For example, in 2023 there was a big drop in environmental spending but lakes like Itasca and also across the whole state lake clarity spiked. However, when environmental spending increased, the lake clarity rebounded. Lake clarity is a metric that can give an idea of what is going on with vegetation nutrients and other things in lakes. It is necessary to make sure that lake clarity doesn’t fluctuate too much, so the health of our lakes stays stable. The best way` to do this is with more money.

We ask that the Minnesota state policymakers increase environmental spending and keep it consistent over several years so that we may better monitor and control the clarity and health of our lakes. We believe that this will lower the amount of fluctuations and allow us to catch anything that could be of harm to the wildlife or humans within a lake. A single lake clarity sample costs under \$50. This pales in comparison to the medical costs which can be at least \$48,000. That isn’t even a surefire way to get rid of any amoeba and heartbreak that can be caused by illnesses and infections from contaminated lakes. This can also improve lake quality, which can raise property values. We need to keep a close eye on the health of our lakes for the betterment of our wildlife and citizens.

Year	Environmental Spending (act.)	Environmental Spending (adj. 2026)	Lake Clarity (seasonal mean in meters)
2018	\$300,895	\$394,836	2.0
2019	\$289,305	\$379,627	2.1
2020	\$296,151	\$388,610	2.0
2021	\$247,829	\$325,202	2.0
2022	\$267,609	\$351,158	2.0
2023	\$185,399	\$243,281	2.1
2024	\$391,201	\$513,335	2.0
Source	General Fund Spending by Major Area	bls.gov	UofM Lake Browser
* Lake Clarity is the distance that light can penetrate in water.			

See more at OWLCelebratesLearning.com