

Malinowski campaign: Statement on letter to superintendents

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Last week, my Republican opponent sent a letter to superintendents across the state attempting to force them to reopen schools. There are no solutions to the school year that will make everyone happy, but I feel confident that a blatant partisan power grab will make **nobody** happy.

I was enrolled in school during Safer-at-Home, and trust me, it was terrible. It was so difficult to learn and pay attention, and I did not receive the same quality of education that I received the semester prior. To all the parents and students who want to go back because they love learning, I get it. I was there too, and my heart goes out to you. That's one reason I'm taking this pandemic seriously.

I also empathize with the equity point. Not every child in our community has access to the same support network or technological resources as the rest of us. Virtual learning has lots of challenges with equal access, and I know that's a concern of many parents.

Here's where the letter goes wrong: school districts are very different from one another, and as a champion of local control, I want those school districts to decide for themselves in the absence of a plan from the state level. This letter is simply another lackluster measure by disengaged, inactive, partisan politicians. They haven't shown up for work in over 100 days (even though our taxes are bankrolling their salary) and have offered no real solutions.

I've watched school boards debate different plans and I've read through the surveys of students, families, and staff. This is a hard thing to plan for, but we need to prioritize the health and safety of everyone connected to our schools. If we thoughtfully plan ahead, we can make sure there are no unnecessary illnesses, our virtual learning is as strong as possible, and that you receive an excellent public school education no matter who you are.

I follow the data, and right now the numbers aren't adding up. If one student tests positive for COVID-19, somewhere between 85-100 students will have to stay home. With active leaders, we could have come up with a real plan. This is the time for the state legislature to step up. A strongly-worded letter with demands tied to funding does not accomplish that. Our current representative is letting everyone down - no matter what option you prefer - by not showing up for work.

I don't claim to have all the answers for reopening schools - I'll keep listening to the experts and prioritizing the students, teachers, staff, administrators, and parents in our community. But here's what I do know: when I'm in Madison, I'm going to earn the salary you pay for. Enough with the political games, it's time to put people first.