

Sen. Larson: Superintendent Underly demonstrates clear vision, strong resolve through challenging times in State of Education speech

Posted on Thursday, Sep 23, 2021

>> **WisPolitics is now on the State Affairs network. Get custom keyword notifications, bill tracking and all WisPolitics content. [Get the app or access via desktop.](#)**

Madison, WI - Wisconsin's public schools are among our state's greatest assets. Despite years of budget constraints, attacks on the teaching profession, and during the pandemic an increase in abusive behavior by an angry few directed at school boards, administrators, and staff, they remain points of pride for cities, towns, and villages across the state.

In her first State of Education address, Dr. Underly addressed all of these concerns head-on, and set an optimistic, solution-focused agenda for the year ahead. She spoke for all parents by acknowledging the frustration of trying to educate our children amid the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. She spoke for our teachers and school board members by offering words of encouragement for their dedicated service in these trying times. As a parent of two MPS children, I know our educators and board members have done all they can to keep our kids safe.

Most of all, she spoke up for our children, whose experiences in K-12 education play a significant role in shaping their futures. When she spoke about "districts who can pass referendums and those who cannot," she acknowledged the difficulty in equitably funding our schools when Republican-authored austerity budgets have forced districts to go to local taxpayers for needed funding time and again. When she talked about "growing gaps between kids who have opportunities and resources and those who don't," she acknowledged our flawed school funding formula, which

creates disparities that favor wealthier districts over more financially challenged communities.

Despite these challenges, Superintendent Underly kept an upbeat and optimistic tone, assuring us that “Working together, we can finally live up to our highest ideals and create a stronger, more equitable public education system that meets the needs of every child in every zip code from preschool all the way through higher education.” If today’s address is any indication, Dr. Underly is more than up to the task. For my part, I will continue to do everything I can in the State Senate to pass budgets and set policies that allow our public schools to thrive. It’s what our families and our communities deserve. When our students succeed, we are all better off.