

# Underly, Kerr clash over transgender girls' participation in school sports

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State superintendent candidate Jill Underly slammed opponent Deb Kerr for what she said was her “transphobic” support of bills to ban transgender students from competing against biologically female students in school sports.

Kerr in a Milwaukee Press Club/WisPolitics.com virtual event today said she doesn't think it's fair to have transgender girls competing against “biological girls,” adding she thinks schools need to make sure students feel like they belong in those schools. Kerr is the former superintendent of Brown Deer School District.

“I do realize that there is a need for kids to be themselves and participate in as many school activities as possible, but I want to make sure it's done fairly,” Kerr said.

But Pecatonica School District Superintendent Underly said she opposes bills that would limit sports competition for transgender students.

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Underly said Kerr's statements were transphobic, adding she was taken aback.

“Trans kids are kids plain and simple, and they deserve to feel welcome in their schools,” Underly said.

Kerr said the issue has nothing to do with transphobia, but some parents are concerned about their kids being able to fairly compete in school sports.

Kerr also said she does not believe DPI should require schools, teachers and students to learn about expanded pronoun use. She added it's important to make sure students feel safe in their schools and local schools should work toward that

goal, but the state should not force anything on those schools regarding the issue.

Kerr also slammed Underly for what she said was an attack on the Brown Deer School District, its employees and the community.

Kerr slammed Underly and third-party groups for smearing the Brown Deer community's reputation with ads accusing Kerr of being involved in a "financial scandal" at Brown Deer.

But Underly said she stands by the statement, adding information about the issue with a former Brown Deer School District business manager is available to the public.

Kerr also said she would call for all public K12 schools in the state to reopen for in-person classes by fall semester of this year, adding she was troubled that Milwaukee Public Schools have not fully reopened yet.

The two also split over the Praxis and Foundations of Reading test, with Kerr supporting the tests for college students seeking their teaching license.

But Underly said the tests are an unnecessary "hoop" for those students to jump through that does not actually help equip them for teaching students how to read. She added that she is in favor of eliminating the test.

"These are barriers and we need to eliminate barriers for good people who are intelligent, and kind and compassionate to become teachers," Underly said. "You can still be a good teacher and you can still be a good teacher of reading if you can't pass a standardized test."

Kerr said the tests are important because they help to make sure schools are getting the most intelligent and forward-thinking teachers.

Kerr said the state should offer more help to those college students so they can more quickly learn the material, pass their tests and join the teaching workforce.

Watch video of the event [here](#).