

# Underly: Statement On Education Funding

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JILL UNDERLY STATEMENT ON EDUCATION FUNDING

Wisconsin families have suffered through a horrific pandemic, costing the lives of thousands of our loved ones, crashing our economy, shutting down our communities, and making life more difficult in countless ways. For our Wisconsin public school students specifically, many have spent more than a year in virtual learning or hybrid learning, and they have lost out on countless experiences, from sports, to school dances, to the most basic socialization required for children and adolescents.

Our schools are changed forever, and our safety protocols must be more stringent going forward. Our buildings require hundreds of millions of dollars of upgrades around the state in order to meet students' basic requirements. While the federal government has made some investments, they are not nearly enough to make up the lost time, needed infrastructure, and all of the needs of our school children, and are limited to covering only certain expenses.

The governor's budget was a good start to make reinvestments alongside the federal aid, and it is devastating to hear the lack of understanding from some leaders in the legislature. Zero increases for local schools exacerbates the teacher recruitment and shortage crisis across the state as districts will struggle to even provide cost-of-living increases to staff for the next two years. I would encourage them to talk directly to local superintendents, local school boards, local teachers, local parents, local students, and their local communities, to understand the great need that our schools still have.

This should not be a political issue — we are simply talking about our local public schools. For most of Wisconsin's long history, significant bipartisan support ensured we were building the best public schools in the country. Wisconsin schools are now falling behind because the state has not been making the necessary investments. It's time to restore our bipartisan commitment to making Wisconsin public schools the best in the nation. Our future depends on it.

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