

# Rep. Pope: Statement on the state of education in Wisconsin

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MADISON—On September 22, 2022, State Superintendent of Public Instruction Dr. Jill Underly delivered her second *State of Education* address. Representative Sonyd Pope (D-Mt. Horeb) released the following statement in response:

**“The Department of Public Instruction has put together a strong budget that makes smart investments in the academic success and mental health of our students. As a retiring member of the State Assembly, I will not be present for the next legislative session to support this budget. That’s why I want to take this opportunity to express my support for DPI’s plan for our public schools, and urge both my colleagues in the State Legislature and the citizens of Wisconsin to do the same.**

**“State Superintendent Underly and Governor Evers have always prioritized doing what is best for our children. They do so with the knowledge that when students are given the tools to succeed academically and a school environment where they feel safe and supported, our communities and entire state ultimately benefit.**

**“A vast majority of families in Wisconsin choose to send their children to local public schools. Unlike private schools that can choose which students may attend, public schools are required by law to educate every child up to age 21, regardless of their need or ability. That’s why it is so crucial that we invest in our public schools and provide them with the resources necessary to ensure every student can be successful, regardless of zip code or socioeconomic status. In order for Wisconsin to thrive, it is imperative that the Legislature ensures we make investments in equity and financial stability for our local school districts.**

**“Supporting our public schools is not and should not be a partisan issue. Regrettably, for more than a decade now, Republicans in the State Legislature have made it one by inadequately funding public schools, villainizing the teaching profession, and making students pawns in their political games. I served on the GOP-led Blue Ribbon Commission on School Funding in 2019 when a bipartisan group of legislators and education experts made and published several realistic, commonsense recommendations to give our schools more resources and flexibility. It is disappointing that Republicans have failed time and again to take their own advice. Wisconsin has the resources available to robustly fund our public schools to minimize districts’ needs to make difficult decisions about what programming or positions to cut, or whether or not to go to referendum. The solutions are there but are being willfully ignored by GOP leadership**

**“Having served as both the Chair and ranking Democratic member of the Assembly Committee on Education during my 20 years in the Assembly, I have engaged closely with the issues impacting our students, educators, administrators, and schools. Throughout this time, I have witnessed our political landscape change, and with it, the state of our public schools. I have deep concerns about the direction our education system is headed in Wisconsin under Republican leadership. Wisconsin, once a bastion of progressivism, now finds itself at the mercy of a Legislature that refuses to invest in its public schools. Continuing down this path will cause great harm to our economy, workforce, and democracy.**

**“Every child deserves access to a high-quality education. DPI’s budget proposal is a step in the right direction for our students, educators, and parents, and I am hopeful that this plan will be passed by the Legislature and put into action in the years to come.”**