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Excerpts from State Superintendent Dr. Jill Underly's 2021 State of Education Address

MADISON – State Superintendent Dr. Jill Underly today will deliver the 2021 State of Education Address at the Wisconsin State Capitol.

In her remarks, Dr. Underly will provide an update to Wisconsin on K-12 education in the state and speak to the opportunities and challenges currently facing students, educators, and families. The 2021 State of the Education Address will begin at noon and can be livestreamed on Wisconsin Eye at WisEye.org/live.

Below are several excerpts from Dr. Underly's speech, as prepared for delivery:

On the importance of strong public schools and libraries in Wisconsin...

"Standing in our state capitol building today, I'm reminded that a commitment to public education is at the center of who we are in Wisconsin. It's enshrined in our state constitution and evident in our innovations like the country's first kindergarten, our university system, technical college system, and our public libraries. From early childhood through higher education, strong public schooling is an enduring legacy of our state. It's been nurtured, generation after generation, to the benefit of us all, and it is why I know public schools and libraries can unite us. Because they have for generations."

On investing in Wisconsin's public schools and libraries...

"As a parent, a district administrator, and now as your state superintendent, I've had the chance to witness up close, and at various vantage points, the powerful role that our public schools and libraries can play. They give me hope, a feeling of connection and certainty our communities crave during these challenging times. And in turn, we need to show our support and commitment to them. They represent this state's future and its greatest treasure – our children. They deserve more than vitriol and divisiveness. They deserve investment."

(more)

On providing equal opportunity to all Wisconsin students...

"Many of us here today are the products of Wisconsin's public schools and universities. Our success is due to the foresight of those who led before us, who invested in our public systems so that the quality of our education was second to none. Today, I question if we are offering the same opportunity to our children and grandchildren, because I know that we are not providing the same investment."

On supporting school staff and school board members...

"This has been a challenging year and a half for all of us, and it's understandable to be frustrated, but we can't turn that frustration against our educators or place blame on our schools. We need to give school staff and school board members grace and the support they need as they work to keep kids safe and avoid disruptions in learning."

On putting Wisconsin students first...

"After a decade of fiscal austerity, of widening gaps between districts who can pass referendums and those who cannot, of growing gaps between kids who have opportunities and resources and those who don't, we're now failing a generation of kids, and we're failing our state by putting Wisconsin's economic future at risk. That needs to change. Now. Because our children deserve better."

On working together to meet the needs of all Wisconsin students...

"The next chapter of Wisconsin's history is still being written. And the chapters that follow this one will be written by our children. As we gather in this historic building on the shoulders of those who came before us, let's harness Wisconsin's forward-thinking spirit and seize the urgency of this moment. 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. Let's find the courage and the political will to make the bold, transformative changes and investments our children, our schools, and our state need for a successful future."

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