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Contact: DPI Media Line, (608) 266-3559, media.inquiries@dpi.wi.gov

State superintendent hears from students on mental health challenges, hosts youth mental health roundtable

Dr. Jill Underly also highlights overall budget proposal, including holding down property taxes, significant increases to special education reimbursement and general aids, paying for healthy school meals, and other provisions

WAUSAU – State Superintendent Dr. Jill Underly today heard from students on the mental health challenges they face during a youth mental health roundtable at Wausau East High School. Last month, Dr. Underly [proposed more than \\$304 million in new investments](#) to support youth mental health as part of her 2025-27 Biennial Budget request.

“I am so appreciative of students at Wausau East High School being vulnerable and sharing with me the things they face on a day-to-day basis and explaining the ways that we – adults – can help meet their individual needs,” Dr. Underly said. “We have the knowledge, tools, and resources to make a real difference in their lives. That is why my upcoming budget calls for increasing access to critical school mental health services and making sure school staff are appropriately trained and ready to address the very real challenges our kids face.”

[Data from the 2023 Youth Risk Behavior Survey](#) shows 59 percent of Wisconsin high school students have experienced at least one mental health challenge over the past year. Dr. Underly’s budget request expands [the School-Based Mental Health Services Program](#) to provide every local education agency in the state \$100 per pupil and broadens the purposes for which funding can be used. Her request also expands aidable costs to districts to allow more pupil services staff to be in schools – school counselors, school psychologists, and school nurses.

On Monday, [Dr. Underly proposed significant new investments](#) to hold down property tax increases and help meet the needs of local schools, students, and educators. Her proposal includes increasing the state reimbursement rate for special education services to 90 percent by Fiscal Year 2027, making per-pupil adjustments to revenue limits and indexing those revenue limits to inflation for the first time in 15 years, and expanding the per-pupil categorical aid program.

(more)

“The way that we, as a state, fund public education has left schools and districts in perilous financial positions for years,” Dr. Underly said. “The time is past due to invest in our schools, especially in this moment. The need is there, and we can hold down property taxes, support our kids, and provide sustainable funding to Wisconsin public schools.”

The DPI’s overall budget request, to be released in full later this month, will propose new, significant investments in K-12 public education. In October, Dr. Underly [announced a budget proposal investing nearly \\$60 million](#) to help school districts resolve staffing challenges and retain teachers and [another \\$42 million proposal](#) that supports the development of readers and schools in implementing mandated early literacy initiatives. Dr. Underly also recently [announced a \\$311 million proposal for school nutrition](#) that provides universal meals to Wisconsin students at no cost to families.

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