

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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State superintendent urges focus on critical public education funding amid legislative distractions

MADISON – State Superintendent Dr. Jill Underly released the following statement ahead of today's Assembly Committee on Education hearing.

“President Trump, billionaire Elon Musk, and their allies are working to divide and undermine public education to reallocate those public tax dollars the ultra-wealthy. The bills being discussed today in our state legislature are a distraction from the real issue: a massive disinvestment in public education and the dismantling of the U.S. Department of Education to facilitate that goal.

“[The true threat is the loss of critical funding for all Wisconsin students](#). Federal funds put teachers in classrooms to keep class sizes small, provide schools with resources to improve academic outcomes, and ensure essential support and services to [help students with disabilities succeed](#). The loss of federal funding will be catastrophic to every single school district and every community in Wisconsin.

“Wisconsinites are deeply invested in the well-being of their public schools and kids. Many of the same people who elected our president also chose to raise their own taxes in support of their local public schools. A quality education is not a partisan issue; it's a priority for all of us, and it's one that should be left for our local communities to manage.

“Nothing happening in the Wisconsin State Legislature today addresses the true needs of our schools. And it certainly does nothing to help all students feel safe, valued, and have equal access to education and opportunity. It's time to refocus on what matters most for kids and our schools and stop chasing these manufactured distractions.”

Background

[According to 2023 Youth Risk Behavior Survey data](#), 59 percent of Wisconsin high school students said they have experienced at least one mental health challenge over the past 12 months. For every five

(more)

Wisconsin LGBTQ+ students, four report experiencing anxiety, three struggle with depression, two face bullying, two seriously contemplate suicide, and one attempts in, survey data shows.

The 2023 YRBS also included specific questions related to depression, anxiety, and non-suicidal self-harm. More than half of students reported experiencing anxiety (51.6 percent), one in three students (35 percent) reported experiencing depression almost every day for two weeks in a row or more, and one in five students (20.9 percent) reported non-suicidal self-harm.

These real statistics highlight the urgent need for better support and resources in schools.

On Tuesday, [Dr. Underly released a statement](#) regarding USDE Secretary Linda McMahon's call for significantly changing the service goals of the federal agency.

Wisconsin is receiving \$838,035,186 in federal funding for the 2024-25 school year. This amount **does not include** funding for school meal programs or direct aids such as Pell Grants. For 2023-24, however, Wisconsin received **\$273,641,559** for school meals, so there's more than \$1 billion of funding into Wisconsin at stake.

The \$838 million includes:

- Title funds to support vulnerable learners
- IDEA funds for students with IEPs
- Funding for youth mental health programs
- Support for English language learners
- Academic enrichment programming
- Career and technical education
- Out-of-school-time programs
- Professional learning for educators and administrators

Programs that are not forward funded, such as school nutrition and impact aid, are particularly vulnerable. Federal budget negotiations will determine the availability of federal funds for the 2025-26 school year. This process will determine the future of federal education funding.

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NOTE: An official photo of Dr. Underly is available [on the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction's website](#). This news release is also available online on the DPI's website.