

Friday, October 17, 2025

Dear Paul Fanlund, Mark Treinen, and Keegan Kyle,

I am writing to demand a public correction of the recent article published by *The Capital Times*, authored by Danielle DuClos, regarding the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction's handling of educator misconduct investigations.

The reporting is not only incomplete and misleading — it is dangerously irresponsible. It distorts the nature of the DPI's work in this area, omits crucial legal and procedural facts, and undermines public trust in the very systems designed to protect Wisconsin students.

Let me be clear: The DPI investigates every allegation of educator misconduct with the highest level of seriousness and effort. Our processes, defined by our authority under state law, are designed to prioritize the safety and well-being of children who deserve to learn in schools that are safe, supportive, and free from harm. This article fails to reflect that reality.

The article's implication that the DPI withholds information from the public is categorically false. All investigatory materials are subject to Wisconsin's open records laws and are released as soon as practicable and upon request. In fact, the very documents cited in DuClos' article were obtained through those means. Additionally, the licensure status of every educator in Wisconsin, including those who are under investigation, revoked, or surrendered, is publicly accessible on the DPI's website. Suggesting otherwise is not only misleading; it is a blatant mischaracterization of fact.

The article also omits key facts surrounding voluntary license surrenders and their purpose. When educators choose to surrender their license during an investigation, it is not a loophole. **It is a binding, legal agreement to a permanent, lifetime ban on their ability to teach in Wisconsin.** The DPI reports these surrenders to the National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification (NASDTEC) database, which is shared amongst all state education agencies, as a flag for educator licensing agencies across the country. DuClos' failure to explain this has caused confusion among the public and legislators, leading to damaging misconceptions.

Voluntary surrenders often spare victims (many of whom are minors) from re-traumatization through lengthy investigations. Choosing to omit this context does severe disservice to victims and misrepresents the DPI's efforts to prioritize their well-being.

DuClos' article also failed to acknowledge the legal framework under which the DPI operates its educator misconduct investigations. Our agency's authority is governed by state statute, and unlike law enforcement agencies, the DPI does not have subpoena power. The statutory definition of "immoral conduct" does not currently include grooming or professional boundary violations, limiting our agency's ability to obtain critical pieces of information. Despite these constraints, DPI investigators work tirelessly within the bounds of law to remove unfit educators from classrooms and prevent further harm. I welcome a long overdue discussion about the need to both modernize our licensing systems, and update existing statutes to clarify, broaden and deepen the limited statutory authority the DPI has in these serious matters.

Inaccurate reporting on such a sensitive topic erodes public trust in the very systems that protect students. I welcome responsible journalism that informs the public. But sensationalism that ignores facts, distorts the truth and omits key context has no place.

I request a prompt public correction or retraction of the inaccuracies in this piece, along with an acknowledgement of the omitted context and facts. Failure to do so only deepens the misinformation and further harms student safety.

We stand ready to provide additional information or clarification at any time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Jill Underly". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Jill" and last name "Underly" clearly distinguishable.

Dr. Jill Underly
State Superintendent
Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction