



WISCONSIN LEGISLATURE

P.O. BOX 7882 • MADISON, WI 53707-7882

October 16, 2025

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction
Superintendent Jill Underly
201 West Washington Ave
Madison, WI 53703

Superintendent Underly,

As you are no doubt aware, the Cap Times published a story on October 15th, outlining the disturbing history of sexual abuse of children in our schools. The individual stories are beyond reprehensible but equally disturbing are the methods the Department of Public Instruction takes (or doesn't take) to investigate, track and document allegations of abuse.

Allowing teachers under investigation to simply resign to stop an in-depth probe of the alleged abuse is a moral disaster. We also wholeheartedly reject the attempt to pin this on the legislature due to an alleged lack of funding. The first dollar spent by DPI should be ensuring that our kids are safe. Full Stop. If parents can't trust that they are sending their children to a truly safe environment, nothing else matters.

While you refused to comment on this alarming story, we are demanding comment on the questions below as Chair and Vice-Chair of the Senate Committee on Education:

- When were you personally made aware that more than 200 sexual assault cases were under investigation?
- You declined to be interviewed for this story, citing a "conflict of interest". What is the conflict of interest and why shouldn't the state's top education official be directly responsible for addressing child safety and educator misconduct?
- Was local law enforcement contacted to help investigate any of these allegations? What policies are in place that would trigger when law enforcement is notified? Are there clear guidelines DPI staff follows in this regard?
- What statutory or administrative authority allows DPI to close cases through license surrender without a formal finding?
- Are local school districts notified when DPI begins an investigation? Is there a clear policy on when the local schools should be notified and are their guidelines on how immediate in the process that notification occurs?



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- What records are kept at DPI recording these cases, including the cases where a staff member resigns or voluntarily gives up their license?
- What safeguards exist to prevent educators who resign or surrender licenses from re-applying at a later date?
- Are future districts warned when these staff apply for other jobs?
- Why are disciplinary outcomes for educators not published in the same manner as other professional licensing boards in Wisconsin? Shouldn't transparency, when it comes to safety of our children, be a top priority?
- The DPI spokesman blamed this inadequate record keeping on a lack of funding. If this is accurate, why was this issue not addressed in your last budget request or voiced in your State of Education Speech?
- The story lists that of the 416 teachers investigated, 207 have kept their licenses and are continuing to work with children. What standard do you have to exonerate those under investigation?
- Does DPI have a written policy for how these cases are identified and how the department takes action to address them? Please provide our offices with any of these records.

We cannot stress how important this issue is to the State of Wisconsin. All parents and students deserve your immediate and direct response to these questions and a full account of what has happened under your tenure.

This simply cannot continue. Our committee will continue to investigate this issue and use any and all of our powers to find a resolution that will keep our kids safe. We demand to know within 24 hours if you will be willing to personally appear before our committee.

Sincerely,

John Jagler

Chair Senate Committee on Education

Romaine Quinn

Vice-Chair Senate Committee on Education