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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

“We must renew our investment in our children by fully funding our public schools”

Sen. Larson reacts to Superintendent Underly’s State of Education Address

Madison, WI – Echoing the sentiments of parents, administrators, and educators across Wisconsin, State Superintendent Dr. Jill Underly called for renewed investment in public education in her State of Education Address this afternoon. Senator Larson, ranking Democrat on the Senate Committee on Education, released the following statement in response:

“For better education outcomes, a brighter future for our communities, and the strength of our democracy, we must renew our investment in our children by fully funding our public schools. Sadly, the necessary investments have been lacking after over a decade of Republican budgets.

“As Dr. Underly points out, ‘the austerity this (and previous) legislatures have insisted on for our schools is starving our public education system.’ This lack of investment hurts all students, but it hurts children from low-income families and students of color the hardest, leading to Wisconsin’s great shame of being among the worst states for racial achievement gaps in the nation.

“From 2012 through 2021, Republican cuts have led to a \$3.9 billion cumulative reduction in state aid to school districts compared to 2011 levels. And yet, in spite of what has now grown to a \$5.4 billion projected budget surplus and a record rainy day fund balance, Republicans still have not restored education funding even to where it was a decade ago, to say nothing of being sufficient to meet current needs.

“This lack of investment would be bad enough without outside forces, funded by right-wing special interests, inserting themselves into debates over schools’ public health measures during the pandemic, LGBTQ inclusive classrooms and extracurricular activities, and even the basic content of our social studies and literature curricula.

“Our classrooms are safer not when our teachers are armed but when they have class sizes small enough for teachers to give sufficient time and attention to every child.

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“Our classrooms are more inclusive when we continue to welcome and support all students, including immigrants, refugees, and children with special needs.

“Our curriculum is more rigorous and successful when we teach real history, cutting edge science, and a broad swathe of literature, not when we ban books and stifle discussions of sensitive subjects like current events or our nation’s past.

“Our talented educators have the training and the dedication they need to prepare our children to be the leaders of tomorrow. Our schools need the resources to recruit, retain, and put these educators in the best position to succeed. I applaud Dr. Underly for making these needs known, and for pointing the way to rigorous, nurturing, and well-rounded public education in Wisconsin.”

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