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CFC Position Statement In Support of Assembly Bill 1

City Forward Collective, alongside our advocacy partners at CFC Action Fund, announce our support for [Assembly Bill 1](#), authored by Representatives Bob Wittke and Todd Novak, and Senate Education Committee Chair John Jagler.

Colleston Morgan, CFC’s Executive Director, stated: “Last week’s results on NAEP, the Nation’s Report Card, underscore a dire reality, and must serve as a wake-up call for us all. Student performance in Wisconsin is languishing – while our state’s Black students, as well as students in Milwaukee Public Schools, remain mired in a deepening, worst-in-the-nation academic crisis. No amount of manipulated data or misleading rhetoric from State Superintendent Jill Underly’s Department of Public Instruction changes these brutal facts.”

Assembly Bill 1 requires DPI to undo the harmful changes made in a closed-door process this summer to lower student performance expectations on state assessments. The bill would require Forward Exam standards to be realigned with the rigorous proficiency standards of a national benchmark, NAEP - The Nation’s Report Card. Standards for high school students would be similarly aligned with ACT’s College & Career Readiness Benchmarks - eliminating the newly-created category of “Meeting, Below College Ready” created by DPI’s changes.

Said Morgan, “We’ve been clear from the start: for us at City Forward Collective, this issue is about our values and our belief in the potential of every child. It’s about right and wrong for kids in Milwaukee and across our state, not the partisan politics of right vs left. Our state’s students and families deserve the truth — it’s time to close the honesty gap, and begin the hard, necessary work to ensure every child receives an excellent education at a high-quality school.”

Hundreds of Wisconsinites Join CFC’s Campaign To Restore High Standards

Along with our endorsement of AB 1, CFC Action Fund is also announcing that more than 750 residents from across Wisconsin have already signed on to our [digital petition](#), calling on state leaders to restore accuracy & transparency in our state standards. CFC Action Fund’s campaign to restore high expectations for all students will continue in the coming weeks, including social media and digital advertising buys to elevate the critical importance of restoring high standards for students and families in Milwaukee & across Wisconsin.

Morgan continued, “At City Forward Collective, we believe every family deserves accurate, transparent, and honest information about how our students and schools are performing. Progress is possible: states that have committed to transparency and accountability for student outcomes, like Louisiana & Tennessee, bucked the national trends and showed progress.

AB 1 represents a necessary step for Wisconsin to follow their lead, by closing Jill Underly & DPI’s [honesty gap](#), and providing Wisconsin’s students, families, and educators with the accurate and transparent information that’s needed to face and change these unacceptable realities.”

Heeding Gov Evers’ Calls to Do What’s Right for Wisconsin’s Kids

State Superintendent Underly and top DPI officials have repeatedly resorted to misleading statements in defense of their decisions to lower expectations for students - claiming that Wisconsin’s prior standards were “above students’ abilities” and that parents needed to “get their hands dirty” to understand how schools were performing, while inaccurately claiming that standards were not lowered and falsely accusing critics of politicizing student performance.

Morgan continued, “There’s good reason that criticism of Jill Underly and DPI’s lowering of the bar has come from across the ideological spectrum, from Governor Evers, to Speaker Vos and Senate Majority Leader LeMahieu, to both challengers in the upcoming elections for State Superintendent.

Governor Evers was right when he said that high standards matter for students in Superior and in Milwaukee. He was right when he said Wisconsin ought to have as high of standards as possible. And he was right when he called these new, lowered expectations a mistake.

We call on Democrats in the Legislature to follow Governor Evers’ lead, and Republicans to follow the lead of Speaker Vos and Majority Leader LeMahieu. Legislators have the opportunity to do what is right for students in Milwaukee and throughout Wisconsin. We need to restore the high standards that the Governor established a decade ago.”

CFC Has Been At The Fore In Challenging DPI’s Secretive Process, Harmful Changes & Misleading Public Rhetoric

Since the Department of Public Instruction first made public its plans to change how student performance would be measured, City Forward Collective has been at the forefront in [expressing our concerns](#) about the harmful changes to [lower Wisconsin’s expectations](#) for students by

- [Calling attention](#) to the secretive, closed-door bureaucratic process – complete with non-disclosure agreements – used by DPI to make these changes [without transparency or public input](#);

- Pointing out [deeply problematic statements by top DPI officials](#), including the [insulting assertions](#) that “Parents must get their hands dirty” in order to determine how schools are performing, and that proficiency on NAEP is “above students’ abilities”; and
- [Identifying the impacts of the honesty gap](#) created by Jill Underly & DPI’s lowered standards, including:
 - 15-25 percentage points differences for students in grades 4 and 8 identified as “Meeting” lowered state standards, compared to NAEP Proficiency, and
 - thousands of HS students now identified as “Meeting” lowered state standards but “Below College/Career Ready” on the ACT

City Forward Collective has also been on record in opposition to previous efforts by DPI officials to lower standards, including [testifying before the Legislature in 2021](#) in opposition to a previous round of changes that lowered the bar for schools.

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City Forward Collective envisions a city where every Milwaukee child receives an excellent education that prepares them to thrive at a high-quality school of their choice. We advance our mission to secure Milwaukee’s future through informing, engaging, and catalyzing transformation across Milwaukee’s K12 school ecosystem.

Learn more about our work at www.cityforwardcollective.org

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CFC Action Fund is a 501(c)(4) organization whose mission is to secure Milwaukee’s future by electing champions and advancing policies to ensure that every Milwaukee child receives an excellent education at a high-quality school of their choice. For more information, visit our website at www.cfcactionfund.org

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