

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Part 2: New Poll – Milwaukee Voters Reject Jill Underly’s Lowered Standards & DPI’s Honesty Gap, Demand Higher Expectations for Students

*Public trust in the Department of Public Instruction and State Superintendent Jill Underly
plummets as voters learn about statewide assessment changes*

City Forward Collective, in partnership with CFC Action Fund, is releasing the second part of our two-part series on polling results regarding K-12 education in Wisconsin. While the [first release](#) focused on Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS), today’s findings highlight statewide concerns about academic standards, the Department of Public Instruction’s (DPI) leadership, and the future of Wisconsin’s education system.

Statement from Colleston Morgan, CFC’s Executive Director:

“State Superintendent Jill Underly and DPI have missed the mark: lowering the bar to mask unacceptable outcomes for Milwaukee’s students and then repeatedly deceiving the public while abdicating responsibility and shifting blame.

These poll results confirm what we’ve been hearing from families across our city and state — they know that meeting a rigorous standard isn’t “above the abilities” of our kids. They want educational leaders to take decisive action to address our academic crisis and improve student outcomes, not continue to lower the bar and defend their indefensible choices with misleading rhetoric.

We’re reiterating our calls for state legislators to follow the [cross-partisan lead of Governor Evers and GOP legislative leadership](#) by taking action to restore high expectations and ensure every student graduates prepared for the future. And, we’re amplifying our calls for voters to [hold State Superintendent Jill Underly accountable](#) for her actions, by showing up to vote in this Tuesday’s primary elections.”

Key Findings on State Superintendent Jill Underly & DPI from CFC's Polling:

On the eve of next week's primary for State Superintendent of Public Instruction, more than half of Milwaukee voters have not formed an opinion on incumbent Jill Underly

- Initial favorability ratings among Milwaukee voters:

Public Official/ Institution	Favorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Never Heard Of
State Superintendent Jill Underly	23%	21%	28%	28%
Governor Tony Evers	64%	24%	—	—
MKE Mayor Cavalier Johnson	47%	27%	20%	—
Milwaukee Public Schools	33%	46%	18%	—
State Superintendent Jill Underly	23%	21%	28%	28%

By a 2:1 Margin, Milwaukee Voters Oppose Jill Underly & DPI's Actions to Lower Expectations for Students

- More than half of respondents (52%) opposed DPI's changes to lower state assessment benchmarks, including 31% who strongly opposed
- Just one-quarter of respondents supported DPI's changes, and only 8% strongly support the changes

Favorable Ratings For Superintendent Underly & DPI Fall When Voters Are Informed About Lowered Expectations

- After respondents were provided factual information about DPI's action to lower the ACT benchmark (from 22 to 19) and the resulting 15-25 point "honesty gap" between Wisconsin's state assessment benchmark and NAEP proficiency results
 - Net job approval (approve - disapprove) for State Superintendent Jill Underly fell by 15 points, with her approval going underwater from +1 to -14
 - Net job approval for DPI fell by 13 points, from -6 to -17

Methodology

Polling was conducted by [Change Research](#) between February 4 - 8, using Dynamic Online Sampling to attain a representative sample. Polling included 502 respondents from registered voters in the City of Milwaukee; post-stratification was performed on age, gender, race/ethnicity, education, and 2020 presidential preference. The margin of error for the full sample is 4.6%.

City Forward Collective is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit that 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

CFC Action Fund is a 501(c)(4) 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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