

# WISCONSIN PUBLIC HEALTH COUNCIL

*Assure safe and healthy people by monitoring progress on the state health plan  
and on the readiness for public health emergencies*



December 6, 2024

## Public Health Council Statement on Milwaukee Public School Audits

The relationship between education, health, and well-being is deeply intertwined. Extensive evidence underscores the critical role of education as a determining factor for health outcomes. Research shows a strong correlation between education and life expectancy, incidence of illnesses, and health-related behaviors. Moreover, educational attainment significantly influences an individual's access to opportunities, employment prospects, and income levels, all of which have substantial implications for overall health and well-being.<sup>1</sup>

As members of Wisconsin's Public Health Council, we fully support your efforts to conduct further audits of MPS. These audits are in response to concerns about the district's inaccurate and incomplete financial reports to the state, which led to an overpayment of state aid estimated to be between \$35 and \$50 million in the previous year. Furthermore, the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI) plays a crucial role in the audit process and has withheld state funds from MPS due to the district's failure to submit necessary financial information in a timely manner.

Given the concerns raised about MPS's financial management, we expect these audits will have a significant impact, ensuring that the district's finances are being handled responsibly and transparently by examining revenue streams, expenditures, and compliance with financial regulations. We expect that the audits also seek to assess how efficiently MPS operates and whether its resources are being used effectively to achieve its educational goals by evaluating the district's administrative processes, curriculum implementation, and student outcomes. In addition, it will investigate the district's efforts to improve student academic performance and ensure the overall well-being of its students by assessing factors such as graduation rates, test scores, and the availability of support services.

As concerned residents of Wisconsin, it is our strong belief that establishing and maintaining transparency and accountability within our public education system is crucial for ensuring that every child receives the high-quality education they deserve. This commitment to transparency and accountability is fundamental in promoting fair and inclusive progress within our education system. By doing so, we aim to provide educators, parents, and policymakers with the necessary information to make well-informed decisions.

The Wisconsin Public Health Council is an action-oriented group that makes recommendations and decisions focusing on strategy and policy recommendations. Recognizing the profound and far-reaching influence of education as a social driver of health and acknowledging the essential role of MPS and the DPI in fostering the health and overall welfare of our community, we wholeheartedly urge all to reaffirm their dedication to prioritizing K-12 education as a foundational and indispensable component of our public health. While we know that it is essential to note that the specific details of these audits, including their scope and findings, may be evolving - we understand that education is not only a means of empowerment for individuals but also a crucial determinant of health, exerting a lasting impact on physical, mental, and social well-being throughout an individual's lifespan.

Our children of today become our leaders of tomorrow and we aid in painting that picture.

Thank you for your time and consideration,  
The Wisconsin Public Health Council

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<sup>1</sup> The Lancet Public Health (2020). Education: a neglected social determinant of health. The Lancet. Public health, 5(7), e361. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S2468-2667\(20\)30144-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2468-2667(20)30144-4)