

**From:** Underly, Jill K. DPI <[Jill.Underly@dpi.wi.gov](mailto:Jill.Underly@dpi.wi.gov)>  
**Sent:** Thursday, November 11, 2021 1:31 PM  
**To:** DPI DL All Staff GEF3 <[DPIDLAllStaffGEF3@dpi.wi.gov](mailto:DPIDLAllStaffGEF3@dpi.wi.gov)>; DPI DL All Staff WCBVI-Admin <[DPIDLAllStaffWCBVI-Admin@dpi.wi.gov](mailto:DPIDLAllStaffWCBVI-Admin@dpi.wi.gov)>; DPI DL All Staff WSD-Admin <[DPIDLAllStaffWSD-Admin@dpi.wi.gov](mailto:DPIDLAllStaffWSD-Admin@dpi.wi.gov)>; DPI DL All WCBVI Staff <[DPIDLAllWCBVIStaff@dpi.wi.gov](mailto:DPIDLAllWCBVIStaff@dpi.wi.gov)>; DPI DL All WSD Staff <[DPIDLAllWSDStaff@dpi.wi.gov](mailto:DPIDLAllWSDStaff@dpi.wi.gov)>; DPI DL WEOP Offices <[dpidlweopoffices@dpi.wi.gov](mailto:dpidlweopoffices@dpi.wi.gov)>; DPI DL WESP All Staff <[DPIDLWESPAllStaff@dpi.wi.gov](mailto:DPIDLWESPAllStaff@dpi.wi.gov)>; DPI DL WESP-DHH Outreach Staff <[DPIDLWESP-DHHStaff@dpi.wi.gov](mailto:DPIDLWESP-DHHStaff@dpi.wi.gov)>; Hudson, Christopher H - DPI <[christopher.hudson@wcbvi.k12.wi.us](mailto:christopher.hudson@wcbvi.k12.wi.us)>; Melton, Michael J. DPI <[Michael.Melton@dpi.wi.gov](mailto:Michael.Melton@dpi.wi.gov)>; WCBVI All Staff <[all.staff@wcbvi.k12.wi.us](mailto:all.staff@wcbvi.k12.wi.us)>; WESP-DHH Staff <[wesp-dhh.staff@wesp-dhh.wi.gov](mailto:wesp-dhh.staff@wesp-dhh.wi.gov)>  
**Subject:** Update and commitments going forward

DPI Staff,

I'm writing to everyone, all staff, to address letters and emails Cabinet received regarding the creation of the Partnerships and Equitable Practices (PEP) team. We have been working directly with the DPI's Women of Color (WOC) Employee Resource Group (ERG) in response to their recent letter, but the concerns and issues matter to this entire agency. The subject was also [recently covered by Madison365](#).

I want to start by saying thank you. I am grateful for the input, and I also know it takes a lot of courage to address actions as wrong when you see them. Being willing to speak your truth is essential. And out of respect for your willingness to take this risk and share, I need to share my truth with you, too.

We – I – made a mistake. In the interest of expediency, I authorized the creation of the PEP Team. I prioritized speed over input. That decision runs counter to the idea of inclusion. Due to the makeup of our institution - and the fact that institutions in and of themselves are made up of white supremacist structures - it also does not honor our commitment to equity and diversity. That was wrong, and I recognize that now, and I also recognize I should have known that before.

Much of the diversity, equity, and inclusion work began in the Evers administration, and continued under Carolyn Stanford Taylor. The concept of developing an equity team at the agency has been discussed for a while, though it was my action to form the team. I made this decision because I believe and want every single one of us to flourish. It is the reason that I ran for office. As the leader of this organization, I need to own our decisions because they are ultimately my decisions.

Here are some commitments I am making to you all:

**I commit to greater transparency on my and Cabinet's general staffing actions and explicitly those connected to diversity, equity, and inclusion.** This includes a commitment to

a reexamination of the PEP team's creation as well as the process used. I am working with the WOC and a facilitator to [establish a restorative practice](#) (generic link), which will include discussion on where we go from here.

**I also commit to professional development that will deepen Cabinet's understanding – and my understanding – of equity, racism, and institutionalized white supremacy.** As your leader, I see and feel the pain and disappointment you have related to the lack of progress. Part of this means more professional development for our leaders and our staff. Equity work is never finished, and we can all benefit from deeper learning. I want to foster trust among teams and across our agency, and shared conversations about race and inclusion are a place to build on.

**I make these commitments from a place of humility.** I know there is more I need to examine and to learn, and I am committing to that learning and that work. I hope to partner with you to build on - and learn from - your work and experiences as well. We have work to do, and I am ready to do it.

Thank you for listening.

Jill Underly