



10 Takeaways from a Massive DPI Oversight Hearing



Did the Department of Public Instruction violate open meetings laws? Are they dragging their feet on fulfilling public records requests in the public interest? Are they spending taxpayer money wisely? On Wednesday, April 15, 2026, the Assembly Government Operations, Accountability, and Transparency Committee [held an informational hearing](#) to answer these questions and IRG General Counsel Jake Curtis and Senior Research Director Quinton Klaron were there to [provide testimony](#) to the committee.

Here are the top 10 takeaways from the Assembly GOAT hearing on April 15th:

1. Superintendent Jill Underly refused to show up to the hearing and did not send ANYONE to testify with firsthand knowledge of the four-day conference.

Rather than appear before lawmakers at a major oversight hearing, Superintendent Underly sent two aides—both relatively new to DPI—to answer questions on her behalf.

The aides sent were not employed by DPI until January 2026 (Andrew Hoyer-Booth, Legislative Liaison) & July 2025 (Underly Cabinet Member [Rich Judge](#), Assistant State Superintendent for the Division of Government & Public Affairs).

2. Rep. Amanda Nedweski (R-Pleasant Prairie) emerged as a leading oversight voice who showed real backbone.

Rep. Amanda Nedweski stood out for her direct questioning and focus on accountability.

“You’re setting very, very impactful policy on academic standards for students throughout the state related to what is proficient. You don’t think there should have been any public involvement?” Nedweski said.

Nedweski said that she submitted a public records request nearly identical to Dairyland Sentinel’s request on March 31st to Superintendent Underly, Tom McCarthy, and Rich Judge. Judge did not recall receiving the request and assured her it is likely being processed.



3. DPI's involvement with contractors raised transparency concerns.

Officials argued that because a private testing vendor, Data Recognition Corporation (DRC), was involved, the four-day standard setting workshop in Wisconsin Dells was not subject to the open meetings law — raising concerns about accountability in decision-making.

DPI argued their 2024 water park conference was not an open meeting violation because their private vendor/contractor - DRC - working with DPI on standardized testing is not subject to open meeting laws, a position clearly at odds with established Wisconsin law.

4. Staffing shortages became the go-to excuse for DPI.

DPI said limited personnel—just four attorneys working on educational issues—has slowed responses to public records requests amid high turnover of staff leaving the department.

DPI blamed lack of resources and staff for their lack of transparency. DPI said they only have [four](#) lawyers working on the requests, not “six or eight” people.

5. The agency signaled it wants more funding - as it always does.

DPI officials demanded additional funding and staffing, arguing it would improve transparency and responsiveness.

DPI suggested more funding and additional resources would expedite their processes.

6. Tension emerged from Democrat representatives regarding the purpose of the legislative oversight hearing.

Rep. Cruz and Rep. Bare openly questioned why the oversight hearing was being held.

Rep. Cruz [stated](#), “I’m trying to understand what we are trying to get at here,” while Rep. Bare [added](#), “I think you probably have better things to be doing with your time than this,” and “[I don’t know what you want us to do.](#)”

7. Lawmakers raised concerns about public records request delays.

Reps. Tyler August (R-Lake Geneva) and Nedweski emphasized that DPI’s timeline for fulfilling public records requests is unreasonable.

“I don’t think it is unreasonable for people to think that this amount of time [over one year] is an unreasonable amount of time,” [Rep. August](#) stated when asking about DPI’s delayed responses to public records requests.



8. DPI acknowledged the third-party record of the process is difficult to access.

Officials claimed the after-the-fact report on the standards-setting process is technically public—but Judge acknowledged, “I won’t say they’re [easily accessible](#)” unless you know “*what you’re looking for.*”

9. Major questions remain unanswered about the closed-door “water park” workshop and several accountability gaps remain pending audits and potential litigation.

DPI declined to answer several critical questions, citing an ongoing audit and possible legal action—leaving key issues unresolved. As a result, the public remains in the dark.

DPI still has not clearly explained how the 88 participants were selected for the standards-setting meeting.

“[They were not appointed](#).... DRC as part of their work convened educators for the purposes that you [DPI] stated...the DPI being the state education agency and having very good contacts across the state helped to recruit those individuals and put out a call and said here are the sort of bounds that we’re looking for in terms of expertise in terms of skillset, and then you know, we’re able to then provide that information to the consultant.” - DPI Staff Andrew Hoyer-Booth

10. An ongoing Investigation from the Joint Legislative Audit Committee continues to shape the issue.

Due to the Joint Legislative Audit Committee’s current review of DPI’s Forward Exam standards changes, DPI officials complained that the GOAT hearing was not necessary.

Co-chair Sen. Wimberger [expressed support](#) for the hearing, emphasizing the importance of legislative oversight as the review continues. The GOAT hearing “once again shows that DPI is actively withholding records from the public over its attempt to quietly lower school standards behind closed doors.”