

# REPRESENTATIVE TERESE BERCEAU PRESS RELEASE



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## **Republican Continue to Attack Campus Free Speech**

Representative Terese Berceau (D – Madison), the ranking Democrat on the Assembly Committee on Colleges and Universities, released the following statement regarding Republican attacks on a workshop on masculinity offered by University Health Services:

“The six-week, non-credit course in question is completely voluntary. It is limited to 30 students to facilitate in-depth, personal discussion. It deals with perceptions and stereotypes, and how masculinity relates to student experiences, gender-based violence, relationships, and drug and alcohol use, which are topics of considerable concern on campus. The program is similar to class in the School of Social Work that has been available to men in fraternities for more than ten years.

“Frankly, the issue isn’t the subject matter that is taught in any particular course or program. The crux of the problem is Republican legislators believing they can micromanage, attack free speech, and use the budget as blackmail whenever the university espouses ideas that are even remotely challenging to conservative orthodoxy.

“We are going down a very dangerous road when Republicans try to dictate what our university offers in terms of learning opportunities. Higher education exists to give students the opportunity to open their minds to let in new information, re-examine their existing assumptions, foster their curiosity, and develop their critical thinking skills. Conservative and liberal students alike should be able to expand their understanding of the world by discussing perspectives other than their own.

“We’ve already seen the problems caused by drastic Republican cuts to UW funding over the past six years. Good professors are leaving. It’s increasingly difficult to get talented new instructors to come here. UW - Madison dropped off the list of the top five research universities for the first time in decades. When Republican legislators threaten to withhold funding, fire professors who teach material they deem controversial, or comb through the list of course offerings to make sure classes meet some conservative definition of what is legitimate to teach, it has a chilling effect on academic and intellectual freedom and threatens our democracy. These attacks on free speech will continue to poison the atmosphere at our university system and do significantly more damage to its national and international reputation.”

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