



WISCONSIN LEGISLATURE

P.O. Box 7882 • Madison, WI 53707-7882

May 1, 2020

Governor Tony Evers
P.O. Box 7863
Madison, WI 53707

Dear Governor Evers:

During these challenging and demanding times, it's essential that all Wisconsinites are heard by their elected officials. The Assembly Committee on State Affairs, chaired by Representative Rob Swearingen, provided an opportunity for legislators and the public to hear from small business owners and industry leaders about the impact of the Safer at Home order on their lives and livelihoods. The committee also explored safe reopening options including the "Back to Business" plan from the Wisconsin Manufacturers & Commerce. We would like to give you a brief summary of the informational hearing that will provide a good foundation for our future discussions on a safe and gradual reopening of the state economy.

The initial Safer at Home order was made on March 17 only hours before restaurants and taverns were to welcome patrons for their traditional St. Patrick's Day meals and celebrations. This unfortunate timing caused restaurant owners to lose money and waste thousands of dollars in food and beverages. The committee hearing also revealed an increasing level of frustration with the designation of so-called essential and non-essential businesses. We see essential businesses that are open and operating safely; others simply want to be granted the same opportunity. Employers are willing to do whatever it takes to begin getting back to work safely. Business owners are seeking any kind of guidance, clarity or timeline. Without any level of certainty, people are beginning to lose hope.

With no end of the shutdown in the foreseeable future, there is a realistic chance that many businesses will close for good. The Wisconsin Restaurant Association predicts half of the state's eating establishments will never reopen. While we understand there are many who are okay with the economic ramifications during this public health emergency, it's important that you know there are many others who are not. A UW-Madison economist told the committee the economic downturn in Wisconsin is unprecedented in both scale and speed in decline. He estimates the pandemic is costing the state \$1.7 billion a week in lost economic activity.

We were pleased to hear that you would like to see a "unified, bipartisan approach" to responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. In these times of crisis, we understand how difficult decisions like these are, but we are all in this together. That's why it is our hope that we can begin direct conversations with you as soon as possible. The Speaker's Office will be reaching out to schedule a two-hour block of time early next week for this important meeting. We would like to discuss a targeted and regional way to safely reopen businesses; it doesn't make sense to treat Superior the same as Milwaukee. As you know, there are areas of the state that have been less impacted by the coronavirus, yet restrictions have mostly been similar. You directed the Department of Natural Resources to only close state parks in certain

regions of the state and not in other areas for a time. This approach can be safely and appropriately applied to businesses and other public entities across the state.

We look forward to working with you, your administration, health experts and business leaders to help make a better tomorrow for all of Wisconsin.

Sincerely,



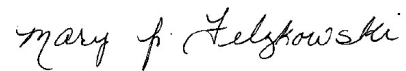
Robin J. Vos
Assembly Speaker



Jim Steineke
Assembly Majority Leader



Tyler August
Speaker Pro Tempore



Mary Felzkowski
Assistant Majority Leader