



May 29, 2020

The Honorable Tony Evers
Governor, State of Wisconsin
State Capitol, Room 115 East
Madison, WI 53707

Secretary-Designee Andrea Palm
Wisconsin Department of Health Services
1 West Wilson St
Madison, WI 53703

DELIVERED ELECTRONICALLY

Governor Evers and Secretary-Designee Palm,

The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the importance of coordination between state government, local government, public health and hospitals in response to public health emergencies. So far, Wisconsin's public health and health care systems have served Wisconsin well. Our members, along with the state, have stepped up quickly to respond to this pandemic and have largely prevented the COVID-19 surge and large-scale community spread we've observed in other states. The dedicated providers and staff working in our member organizations, charged with carrying out these strategies, are owed a debt of gratitude for their work.

Our organizations appreciate the significant time and resource commitment made by the state to support those on the frontlines of this pandemic. The state has played a vital role in acquiring necessary personal protective equipment, testing supplies and critical financial aid to support our work.

As we look ahead, we want to continue a dialogue with you to ensure we are best utilizing our collective resources to further "box in" this virus while getting critical non-COVID care to patients who need it.

In the weeks and months ahead, our health care system will be operating at or above capacity to meet care needs that have been accruing. County and health system behavioral health providers are seeing significant increases in patient cases. Hospitals and health systems have months' worth of delayed procedures and diagnostic services to schedule. Public health testing and contact tracing will increase to successfully open our state's economy.

None of us can be everything for everyone. We all bring different skills and resources to the table. To that point, we encourage your Administration to focus your aid and strategies to each of our strengths. We all need to work in concert to avoid duplication, eliminate confusion and most efficiently utilize the limited collective resources at our disposal.

For instance, plans to conduct community testing need to be considered in conjunction with other testing – notably testing patients for COVID-19 symptoms in healthcare settings. COVID-19 testing capacity at hospitals is needed for patients in need of non-COVID care. We cannot risk further delaying behavioral health services, care for chronic conditions, surgical procedures and other important care which must be resumed.

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The state's efforts to implement broad-based community testing should be coordinated through our existing local public health infrastructure with the necessary resources and support. This shift will be most successful if we first identify our shared testing strategies, identify the partners needed to implement plans, define roles and responsibilities, provide guidance on related procedures (e.g. collecting, labs, reporting), agree on measures and allocate resources based on the operational needs.

As we have already done, we will continue working together at a state level to coordinate efforts and communicate needs between our member organizations and your Administration. Our staff will follow-up with a meeting request of Secretary-designee Palm and her team to discuss ways we can support and inform your coordinated statewide strategy for community testing.

Sincerely,

/s/ Eric Ostermann
Executive Director
Wisconsin Association of Local Health Departments and Boards
Wisconsin Public Health Association

/s/ Mark O'Connell
Executive Director
Wisconsin Counties Association

/s/ Eric Borgerding
President and CEO
Wisconsin Hospital Association