



March 17, 2020

Governor Tony Evers
115 East, Wisconsin State Capitol
Madison, WI 53712

DELIVERED VIA EMAIL

Dear Governor Evers:

On behalf of Wisconsin's 72 counties, thank you for your leadership as our state and local governments navigate the incredibly challenging issues posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. As you discuss and deliberate policy measures intended to ease the burdens associated with the public health crisis, our county leaders would appreciate your consideration of the following issues, all of which are intended to ensure the continuation of vital services to our citizens:

1. Coronavirus Preparedness and Response Supplemental Appropriations Act (P.L. 116-123): The Association requests the state quickly provide guidance to counties on the timing, requirements, and next steps for the sub allocation and use of funds.
2. Wisconsin Open Meetings Law: The Association requests that you issue an Executive Order authorizing that a governmental body that, for reasons of economic hardship or technological shortcomings, is unable to provide public access to a meeting be considered in compliance with the Open Meetings Law and the public notice requirements associated therewith if the governmental entity posts on its website a full and complete transcript, recording, or other comprehensive record of the meeting as soon as practicable upon the meeting's conclusion.
3. April Election: The Association urges the state to retain the April 7 election date. Most elective offices become vacant upon the expiration of the office holder's term pursuant to Wis. Stat. § 17.03(10). The exception to this rule is for offices with a term that "shall continue for 4 years *and until his or her successor qualifies.*" Wis. Stat. §§ 17.03(10), 59.20(2)(a) and (b) (e.g., the

sheriff, coroner, register of deeds, and district attorney). County board supervisors only hold office until the expiration of their term. Wis. Stat. § 17.03(10). Further, any vacancies on the county board may only be filled by appointment by the county board chair (with the approval of the board) or upon a special election ordered by the board under Wis. Stat. § 59.10(3)(e). However, there would be no board/board chair if all supervisor positions are vacant in the event the April election is delayed.

4. Absentee Voting: The Association requests, and offers support for, a statewide public communications campaign encouraging citizens to complete absentee ballots in advance of Election Day.
5. Medical Provider Shortages: The Association urges you to issue an executive order allowing retired medical and emergency service providers whose license has lapsed to be allowed to return to their prior profession and assist during this crisis, similar to what Colorado has approved.
6. Emergency Medical Services: The Association requests the state suspend the inter-state compacts so that EMS services from Wisconsin and neighboring states can cross state lines to assist each other without fear of liability.
7. Determination of “Essential Providers”: The Association requests that you allow counties and local governments the opportunity to identify and define the category of employees that are considered “essential” for the provision of emergency, public safety, and health and human services. This identification will be critical for purposes of determining which employees will be entitled to time away from work.
8. Childcare: Providing childcare to families that have a sudden and acute need for such care in the wake of school closings is a critical need. Existing daycare facilities are ill-equipped to handle a large influx of children in need of care and the “essential” county and local government employees need and deserve adequate facilities for their children. We would appreciate you allowing for cooperation between our school districts and local governments to provide childcare without needing to meet the applicable regulations surrounding licensed childcare facilities.

These are issues which have been identified by county leaders as those which warrant prompt attention. Counties will likely have further recommendations and requests should

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this public health challenge worsen or continue. We look forward to continuing our discussions with you on these and other issues impacting our state. Thank you for your consideration and thank you again for your leadership during this time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mark D. O'Connell". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'M' and a long, sweeping tail.

Mark D. O'Connell
Executive Director
Wisconsin Counties Association