

March 29, 2020

To: Governor Tony Evers
Senate Majority Leader Scott Fitzgerald
Assembly Speaker Robin Vos
Members of the State Senate
Members of the State Assembly

From: The Wisconsin Hotel & Lodging Association
The Wisconsin Restaurant Association
The Association of Wisconsin Tourist Attractions
Skiing Wisconsin

RE: Request for Assistance for Wisconsin's Hospitality Industry

As you are well aware, the current COVID-19 pandemic has decimated Wisconsin's restaurants, hotels, other lodging and other tourism industries around the state as one of the first industries to be quickly impacted and universally devastated as travel and tourism ground to almost a complete halt.

The cash flow stoppage has forced the vast majority of hotels & other lodging businesses and restaurants to lay off a significant portion of Wisconsin's treasured hospitality employees, stopping their ability to meet basic costs of doing business.

Recent COVID-19 legislation passed by Congress offer some options for relief, but will not suffice to keep tourism businesses viable, and will take time to implement effectively.

Unfortunately, Business Interruption Insurance, invested in by many businesses assuming they would be protected, does not cover their economic damages from the pandemic, meaning their options for reducing their debt during this crisis have disappeared.

As we do our best to address the overwhelming challenges, we are today asking for your assistance in implementing the following state actions to meet us partway in enabling our industry to someday gradually come back:

1. **Waive the one-week waiting period for Unemployment Compensation** to help our valued employees to survive. We suggest that this waiver would end when the pandemic recedes.
2. **Waive the current minimum of 20 employees for a business to be eligible for the Work-Share program.** Small businesses with less than 20 employees face the same, if not worse, hardships during this crisis, and this eligibility would help.

3. Provide **additional new WEDC interest-free loans** to businesses needing help to bridge the time until revenue can once again allow them to meet payroll and pay bills.
4. Provide a **90-day extension for ALL state tax payments along with local property tax payments**, and **provide for installment payment schedules** so that businesses eventually beginning to regain income can meet deadlines for tax payments.
5. Ensure that **reimbursements owed by the state for overpayments of estimated taxes are issued immediately**.
6. **Impose a freeze on Unemployment Rates**, so that businesses hardest hit with lay-offs do not face insurmountable rate increases for a crisis beyond their control.
7. **Allow packaged alcohol to be delivered when food is delivered**. The sale of alcohol is a profit center for hospitality, whereas food sales have much narrower margins. In addition to helping all hospitality businesses with alcohol licenses to survive, this would also meet consumer demand and encourage consumers to stay home. To ensure legal compliance, face-to-face ID checking would be required upon delivery and drivers would need to be at least 21 years old.

We ask for your help in helping to make a way for Wisconsin's valued tourism industry to come back when the crisis subsides.

Thank you.

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