



April 9, 2020

The Honorable Dr. Tony Evers
Governor, State of Wisconsin
115 East, State Capitol
Madison, WI 53708

Governor Tony Evers,

We represent employers throughout Wisconsin, from all sectors of our economy, and of all sizes. Employers appreciate the attention to public health that you and your administration have had in recent weeks. We all want to reduce infections of COVID-19 so that Wisconsin can get back to work and get back to spending time with family and friends as soon as possible.

Unfortunately, the social distancing requirements within the Safer at Home order have not come without significant economic cost. We have broken records for unemployment claims, with nearly 300,000 new claims in March alone. Foot traffic at retail businesses is down more than 50%, and is down more than 75% at restaurants. Our state unemployment rate is now estimated to be 13.4%, which is higher than any time in recorded history – and it is expected to climb higher.

Businesses and their employees find themselves in times of unprecedented hardship and uncertainty. Wisconsin needs to bring certainty to workers and businesses alike by setting a firm date to begin the process of reopening our economy on April 24 – the end date for the Safer at Home order.

To be clear, no one expects that our economy would go back to “business as usual” on April 24. We understand that reopening will require a very strategic and well-planned approach that, over time, phases our economy back to an operational level that existed prior to any social distancing requirements.

With that said, policymakers must recognize the economy will not restart without careful preparation and planning. Many businesses simply cannot restart their operations on short notice. Employers must have lead time to recall furloughed employees back to work, make new hires to replace lost employees, restock supplies and raw materials, reengage their supply and distribution chains, and find a means to recapitalize their businesses to accomplish these steps.

Utilizing the April 24 expiration of the Safer at Home order as the target date will allow businesses and workers to engage in the planning necessary to relieve the current economic hardship, and importantly, demonstrate to Wisconsin citizens who are struggling that there is light at the end of the tunnel.

Wisconsin businesses fully recognize that as businesses begin to reopen, there will be a need to maintain some level of social distancing requirements, and perhaps other steps to mitigate person-to-person spread that might involve the use of masks, gloves or other personal protective equipment. We also understand that the approach to reopening businesses may involve a more targeted geographic approach which recognizes that different parts of the state are having a very different experience in terms of transmission and infection rates.

Thank you again for your focus on public health during this unfortunate time. We stand ready to work with you to ensure that our economic health is able to come back strong after the COVID-19 pandemic is behind us, and we hope you will agree that Wisconsin needs to begin that process on April 24.

Respectfully,

Wisconsin Business Trade Associations

Alliance of Wisconsin Retailers
American Chemistry Council
Bowling Centers Association of Wisconsin
Chiropractic Society of Wisconsin
Independent Business Association of Wisconsin
National Federation of Independent Business
Professional Insurance Agents of Wisconsin, Inc.
Tavern League of Wisconsin
Wisconsin Amusement & Music Operators
Wisconsin Association of Textile Services

Wisconsin Automatic Merchandising Council
Wisconsin Cast Metals Association
Wisconsin Dairy Alliance
Wisconsin Grocers Association
Wisconsin Independent Businesses
Wisconsin Manufacturers & Commerce
Wisconsin Motor Carriers Association
Wisconsin Petroleum Council
Wisconsin Restaurant Association

Wisconsin Chambers of Commerce

Antigo/Langlade County Chamber of Commerce
Burlington Area Chamber of Commerce
Cedarburg Chamber of Commerce
Chippewa Falls Area Chamber of Commerce
Cottage Grove Chamber of Commerce
Elkhorn Area Chamber of Commerce & Tourism Center, Inc.
Fox Cities Chamber of Commerce and Industry
Geneva Lake West Chamber of Commerce
Greater Brookfield Chamber of Commerce
Hartland Area Chamber of Commerce
Jefferson Chamber of Commerce
Marinette Menominee Area Chamber of Commerce
Marshfield Area Chamber of Commerce & Industry
Merrill Area Chamber of Commerce
Milton Area Chamber of Commerce
Monroe Chamber of Commerce & Industry
Mosinee Area Chamber of Commerce
Mount Horeb Area Chamber of Commerce
Muskego Area Chamber of Commerce
New Berlin Chamber of Commerce & Vis. Bureau
New London Area Chamber of Commerce
Oshkosh Chamber of Commerce
Park Falls Area Chamber of Commerce
Portage Area Chamber of Commerce
Portage County Business Council
Pulaski Area Chamber of Commerce
Racine Area Manufacturers and Commerce
The Chamber of Manitowoc County
Tomah Chamber & Visitors Center
Walworth County Economic Development Alliance
Watertown Area Chamber of Commerce
Wauwatosa Chamber of Commerce
West Bend Area Chamber of Commerce

cc: Wisconsin Legislators