

Badger Institute: Free-market coalition applauds responsible coronavirus relief package

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The Wisconsin Legislature just passed a bipartisan coronavirus response package that included policy reforms recommended by the Wisconsin Free-Market Coalition. The Legislature is to be commended for avoiding the temptation to turn this into a massive spending bill, opting instead to exercise the fiscal restraint that provided Wisconsin with a budget surplus and healthy rainy-day fund when this crisis began.

By taking swift and responsible action to address the economic damage created by this epidemic, by lifting barriers to the health care community and holding the line on spending, Wisconsin is in a much better position to fight this pandemic and get back to normal.

Over the last few weeks, our coalition has suggested several non-fiscal policy solutions for addressing the current crisis. Among the recommendations included in the package are:

- Acceptance of health care providers with a valid and current license issued by another state to practice in Wisconsin without first obtaining a temporary or permanent license.
- Allowance of temporary licenses to remain valid for 30 days after the conclusion of the public health emergency.
- Expansion of scope of practice for physicians' assistants and nurse practitioners.
- Expediting license renewal for retired medical professionals and those with a recently expired license.
- Expansion of the Work-Share program so more businesses can participate.

- Extended refill periods for prescription drugs.

We also applaud the Legislature for addressing critical needs for Wisconsin schools. This legislation gives all schools – traditional public, public charter, and private schools participating in the parental choice program – access to the same waivers and flexibilities during this uncertain time of school closures. These include waiving instructional seat time requirements and barriers to student graduation. The legislation also extends existing statutory requirements for specific programs, like open enrollment and parental choice program enrollment, so families and schools are able to fully participate next year.

Much more will need to be done to protect public health, make it easier for Wisconsinites to get back to work and create an economic framework that allows businesses to once again flourish. This is only the beginning of the process, as the Legislature and governor will need to work together again later this year to address budget shortfalls and restore Wisconsin as a vibrant place to live, work and do business.

We encourage the Governor to sign AB 1038 as soon as possible to reassure the people of Wisconsin that help is on the way.