

Free Market Coalition: COVID-19 letter to legislators

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Members of the Legislature,

The unprecedented COVID crisis has devastated Wisconsin families, businesses and schools. The coming weeks will be deeply challenging as the state tries to pick up the pieces in the aftermath. Now, more than ever, public policy matters.

We believe that the road to recovery is paved with free-market reforms that remove burdensome red tape, empower families and local leaders, and provide relief to small businesses and workers. With this in mind, *Americans for Prosperity-Wisconsin, Wisconsin Institute for Law & Liberty, Badger Institute, and the Maclver Institute strongly urge lawmakers to enact the following common-sense reforms, many of which impose no additional cost to state finances:*

Give Relief to Workers and Businesses

- 1. *Allow Work-Share requirements to apply to businesses of any size-***
The [Wisconsin Work-Share program](#) allows companies to avoid layoffs by curtailing hours and allowing affected employees to draw pro-rated unemployment insurance. While this program is typically used by larger businesses, the state should make it easier for small- and medium-sized businesses to take advantage of the program during economic crises.
- 2. *Place a moratorium on “non-essential” new regulations -***
Policymakers can provide small businesses with economic relief and more certainty if they would put a simple moratorium on new regulations that do not directly relate to the crisis.
- 3. *Encourage home-based businesses*** – Arizona’s 2018 [Home-Based](#)

[Business Fairness Act](#) designates a category of “no impact” home-based businesses that can operate with a special permit or license. Under the law, these businesses that don’t disrupt the residential area they’re located in may operate without completing time-consuming permitting or zoning processes. If the government is mandating people work from home, then it’s a no-brainer for Wisconsin to adopt the Arizona model.

4. Allow alcohol delivery and pickup options - Some states have taken action already to allow for delivered alcohol during the outbreak. Wisconsin can do this too and give restaurants and breweries increased sales during the quarantine.

5. Suspend or rescind energy, transportation, or environmental regulations that disrupt supply chains and unintentionally impact health and safety - Because supplies and goods must move quickly and efficiently throughout the state, lawmakers should suspend any regulations that are inhibiting our ability to respond to the pandemic.

6. Waive new taxes on workers teleworking across state lines - For workers that may temporarily reside in Wisconsin due to telework or otherwise, the result could mean a new tax liability. For tax purposes, Wisconsin should treat telework during the COVID-19 pandemic as temporary and continue taxing businesses as they were before widespread and temporary telework began.

7. Direct state agencies to review rules and allow for rapid cuts to red tape - Arkansas Gov. Asa Hutchinson issued an [executive order](#) that directs all state agencies to review their rules, identify any red tape hindering the coronavirus response and put those regulations up on their website. Such regulations will be automatically suspended by emergency order for 30 days. Wisconsin should follow suit.

Remove Red Tape in Healthcare that Hinders the Recovery

1. **Increase testing** - To address any testing shortage, Wisconsin should use the [FDA waiver to authorize state labs to develop and implement COVID-19 tests](#). Increasing the availability of testing may be critical to getting Wisconsin past the immediate crisis and can provide an avenue back to opening up parts

of the economy.

2. Remove moratorium on hospital beds - Wisconsin has a [moratorium on the number of hospital beds](#) allowed in the state. While the number of beds may be more than sufficient during normal periods, this moratorium should be lifted, at minimum, during public health emergencies.

3. Make it easier to refill prescriptions - Allow pharmacists to extend prescription refills by 30 days during public health emergencies to ensure patients can remain at home without worrying about venturing out for new refills.

Further Empower Parents and School Leaders

1. **Ensure accountability on schools** -As stories appear that school districts are dropping the ball and failing to educate students during recent weeks, state policymakers must make it abundantly clear that school districts must use tax dollars to educate students.

2. Oversight of federal stimulus dollars - The federal CARES Act has allocated over \$200 million for Wisconsin K-12 education to Gov. Tony Evers and local school districts. This influx in funding needs to be allocated in a collaborative and transparent manner that helps families, teachers, and school leaders continue to provide education in this difficult environment.

3. Increase virtual course access - SB 789 (Darling / Thiesfeldt) would better prepare families for the fallout of COVID by allowing any student to take up to two courses at any other school, including virtual. The bipartisan bill, already approved in the Assembly, awaits a vote in the Senate.

The free-market coalition of Wisconsin stands ready to assist you in these unprecedented, challenging times. Thank you for considering these recommendations.