

Rep. Shankland: We will get through this pandemic together

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In many ways, the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated systemic inequalities in our community and our state. Every day, I hear from folks who are struggling to make ends meet and who are understandably concerned about what comes next. I am heartbroken by the multitude of hardships that the COVID-19 pandemic has presented for many of our community members, and am more motivated than ever to tackle the root of these problems. Please know that if you are in this situation, you are not alone, and if I can assist you in any way, please do not hesitate to reach out. Recently, Governor Evers announced several new programs to assist the people of Wisconsin through this difficult time. First, the Wisconsin Rental Assistance Program will provide up to \$3,000 over three months in rental payments and/or security deposits for Wisconsin tenants who have experienced income loss as a result of COVID-19. A total of \$25 million is dedicated to helping tenants stay in their homes. Locally, CAP Services is administering the program, and you can apply now at capservices.org/wrap.

The Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC)'s \$75 million *We're All In* initiative will provide \$2,500 cash grants to small businesses with 20 or fewer FTEs impacted by COVID-19 that have not already received WEDC COVID-19 assistance. Businesses will be able to apply for this program at wedc.org beginning June 15.

For farmers who are affected financially by this pandemic, an additional \$50 million will be distributed through the Wisconsin Farm Support Program in direct payments to farmers, which you can apply for starting June 15 at revenue.wi.gov. Furthermore, a new \$15 million Food Security Initiative was launched to combat hunger in our state by helping food banks, pantries, and nonprofits fighting food insecurity adapt to the challenges posed by the public health crisis and to purchase,

process, and store Wisconsin agricultural products for distribution to those in need.

The governor is supporting childcare providers by providing \$51.6 million for hazard pay to childcare workers and financial support for our childcare providers. He is investing in emergency medical services, home and community-based services, and long-term care providers like nursing homes and assisted living facilities by allocating \$100 million to help support expenses directly related to COVID-19. Governor Evers recently announced a \$1 billion effort to support COVID-19 testing, contact tracing, supplies, and emergency operations for communities across Wisconsin. Finally, the state will also provide \$200 million in grants to local governments to help them with unbudgeted expenditures incurred due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

This is an all hands on deck approach: the federal government has supported us with CARES Act funds for all of these programs, and the state is marshaling resources to farmers, businesses, childcare providers, EMS providers, hospitals, local governments, and more. We can all do our part locally, too. As the number of COVID-19 cases grows in Portage County, I encourage everyone to continue to follow the guidelines set by public health experts to help protect ourselves and each other, from social distancing and washing our hands often to staying home when we are sick. Together, we can limit the spread of COVID-19.

I greatly appreciate the programs announced by Governor Evers and the federal funding for them. I also recognize the magnitude of the problems we are facing. I know that the work in front of us is far from over. This week, I signed on to a bipartisan bill to double the financial support for our small businesses affected by the pandemic, and I will continue to work with my colleagues in both parties to support our community members through COVID-19 and beyond. If you need assistance with an unemployment insurance claim, would like more information about any of these programs, or have questions about additional resources available, please reach out to me at Rep.shankland@legis.wisconsin.gov or 608-267-9649. My staff and I are here to serve you, and we will get through this together.