

Sen. Freyen: Letter asking for the creation of economic recovery taskforce

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First and foremost, I would like to recognize that we are in a time of unprecedented tough choices. You have been dealt the challenging task of leading our state through a global pandemic, which is no easy task. I think we all, personally and professionally, are currently finding ourselves in situations we could not have imagined just a few short months ago.

A few months ago, our unemployment rate was hovering around three percent. Now, we are pushing twenty percent unemployment. A few months ago, most businesses had “Help Wanted” signs in their windows. Now, most have “Closed Indefinitely” signs. A few months ago, policymakers were seeking innovative ideas to bring more people to the state to fill over one hundred thousand open jobs. Now, people who find themselves unemployed are largely unable to apply for jobs due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

As we look forward, we must carefully balance the preservation of public health with the dire need for economic reinvigoration. Today, I am requesting you lay the groundwork for our economic revival by creating the Wisconsin Economic Recovery Taskforce. By compiling Wisconsin’s best and brightest in business, healthcare, education, public safety and other key sectors we can ensure adequate focus is being put on our state’s economic future as we continue to navigate the challenging health aspects of a global pandemic.

I appreciate and support the need to protect public safety, health and welfare. However, using an economic lens to examine the challenges we are being confronted with can only help in ensuring our state is making holistic, well-informed

decisions that prioritize the long-term wellness of our citizens, our state and our economy. Business leaders of Wisconsin need a seat at the table so that they can hit the ground running when the time comes to strategically and safely reopen Wisconsin's economy. Their advice at this critical juncture would be a positive first step towards acknowledging the dire economic straits our state has been quickly plunged in to.

Many legislative offices have begun receiving a flood of calls asking when we are going to reopen our economy. Our constituents are scared, and rightfully so, for their families, their livelihoods, and their communities. The longer we leave this economic moratorium in place, the smaller the number of businesses that will be able to emerge and operate on the other side. Balancing our health and economic needs is key; but swift, decisive action is also needed to reassure business owners and Wisconsin residents that our state government is fighting for their survival. There is no silver bullet that will instantly return Wisconsin's economy to its pre-pandemic flourishing. That is why a thoughtful, proactive, inclusive plan to scale back up to full activity is more vital and more urgent than ever before.

Please do not hesitate to reach out if I, my Senate colleagues or my WEDC Board of Director peers can be of assistance as we look to our state's future and work to ensure we are poised for a roaring economic recovery that will bolster every Wisconsin family along the way.