

WISPIRG: Top health care professionals tell Wisconsin leaders its time to shut down, start over and do it right

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MADISON — Amid [uncontrolled spread](#) of the novel coronavirus in Wisconsin, WISPIRG and top health experts [delivered a letter](#) Thursday to Gov. Tony Evers, State Senate Majority Leader Scott Fitzgerald, and State Assembly Speaker Robin Vos, calling on the state leaders to shut back down, start over with new policies to thwart COVID-19, and to do it right. The letter calls for implementing stay at home restrictions to slow the virus, while increasing testing capacity and production of personal protective equipment.

The more than 150 signers of the letter include Ezekiel J. Emanuel, MD, PhD-University of Pennsylvania, William Hanage, PhD-Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, Seth Trueger, MD, MPH-Northwestern University, Megan Ranney, MD, MPH-Brown University & GetUsPPE, and Saskia Popescu, PhD, MPH, MA, CIC-University of Arizona.

“Our decision makers need to hit the reset button,” **said WISPIRG director Peter Skopec.** “Continuing on our current path will result in widespread suffering and death. And for what? Health experts laid out criteria for how to reopen safely. It’s time to listen to them.”

WISPIRG’s national partner, U.S. PIRG, delivered the letter to leadership in Congress and the Trump Administration as well.

More than 117,000 Americans had died of COVID-19 by mid-June. If the U.S.

response had been as effective as Germany's, estimates show that America would have had only 36,000 COVID-19 deaths in that period. If the [U.S.'s response had been as effective](#) as South Korea, Australia or Singapore's, fewer than 2,000 Americans would have died.

Wisconsin reopened non-essential businesses and loosened shelter-in-place orders too quickly and did so without meeting key criteria that health experts laid out to reopen safely. Those criteria include:

- Enough daily testing capacity to test everyone with flu-like symptoms plus anyone they have been in close contact with over the last two weeks (at least 10 additional tests per symptomatic person). Currently, the United States has only [35 percent of the testing capacity](#) it needs to meet that threshold. Wisconsin is not meeting the criteria.
- A [workforce of contact tracers](#) large enough to trace all current cases. According to an NPR survey, as of last month most states, including Wisconsin, [are far short](#) of the number of contact tracers they need.
- [More personal protective equipment \(PPE\)](#) to keep essential workers such as health professionals, emergency responders and grocery store clerks safe.

We expect our leaders to lead in these deeply troubling times, the letter explained.

"Tell the American people the truth about the virus, even when it's hard," the letter demands of our elected officials. "Take bold action to save lives — even when it means shutting down again."