

WMC: Clarity needed from DHS and Sec. Andrea Palm

Posted on Wednesday, Jul 8, 2020

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MADISON – Department of Health Services (DHS) Secretary Andrea Palm caused further confusion on Tuesday in response to a question about whether the Department would release information about businesses with employees who have tested positive for COVID-19.

Last week, Wisconsin Manufacturers & Commerce (WMC) was made aware of a plan for the Evers Administration to publish the names of businesses and the number of their employees who have tested positive for COVID-19 on the DHS website. [In a letter to Gov. Tony Evers](#), WMC President & CEO Kurt Bauer said, “this action has the potential to spread false information that will damage the consumer brands of Wisconsin employers, causing them to incur a significant amount of financial losses and reputational damage.”

Following WMC’s letter, a DHS spokesperson said the agency had no immediate plans to list businesses with COVID-19 positives on their website. This was met with approval from the business community that felt individual employers could be improperly targeted if they had employees who tested positive, even if the employees contracted COVID-19 outside the workplace.

During a media briefing on Tuesday, however, Sec. Palm seemed to open the door again for publishing information about businesses, commenting that it just wouldn’t happen “this week.”

Following Sec. Palm’s comments, WMC President & CEO Kurt Bauer released the below statement:

“COVID-19 and the elongated safer at home order pummeled Wisconsin’s economy. Publishing the names of businesses with employees who have tested positive for COVID-19 would likely cause even more economic damage to employers on the list while doing nothing to improve public health. Not to mention, the uncertainty coming from DHS over the last week has left businesses around the state wondering if they are going to become a target of this potentially defamatory release. In light

of Sec. Palm's comments, WMC and our members once again urge DHS not to publish this information."