

WMC: La Crosse County lacks legal authority for Health Order

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LA CROSSE – Wisconsin Manufacturers & Commerce (WMC) – the combined state chamber of commerce, manufacturers’ association and safety council – sent a letter to the La Crosse County Administrator and Board of Supervisors on Thursday outlining the questionable legal authority it has to issue a “County Health Department Advisory Order” that would inflict significant economic harm on residents and businesses.

The [Advisory Order](#) – which was issued late last week – limits indoor public gatherings to 25 percent of capacity and gives the County enforcement authority over businesses that do not comply with the order.

WMC’s letter explains that the County’s order is not only “legally deficient” but also “bad public policy that will create confusion, uncertainty and fear.”

“WMC has been in constant contact with our members and the business community at large to operate in a safe and responsible manner that protects both their employees and customers,” said WMC General Counsel Cory Fish in the letter. “WMC believes this education, rather than regulatory mandates including this ‘advisory’ Order, is the best way to collaboratively move forward and slow the spread of COVID-19.”

According to WMC’s letter, the County’s Order goes beyond the authority the legislature delegated to local public health officers, and it takes various sections of statute out of context to weave together “authority” that it does not have. The letter goes on to state that enforcing such an order could lead to significant amounts of permanent business closures and job losses for county residents. WMC calls on La Crosse County to work with its business community to create rules that balance both public health and economic considerations.

[Click here](#) to read the full letter.