



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Preparation, not Panic: What you can do to prevent the spread of Coronavirus

With the World Health Organization proclaiming the COVID-19 outbreak as an official pandemic, and states across the country declaring a state of emergency, it is an understandably frightening and confusing time. But as more individuals are being tested across Wisconsin and confirmed cases are likely to rise, it's crucial we all take this seriously.

Schools are closing, sporting events are being canceled and we're being asked to opt-out of social gatherings and even stay home from work. If you're frustrated, you're not alone. But it's important to understand that these precautions are being taken for a reason. In a global health crisis like this, it's not just ourselves that we're looking out for. It is the elderly, those with pre-existing conditions and our health care workers we need to be thinking about.

While it's true that COVID-19, better known as coronavirus, likely poses little risk to those who are young and healthy, it's hitting elderly people and those with chronic health conditions particularly hard. By taking the recommended steps – washing your hands, covering your mouth when you sneeze or cough, and staying home when you're sick – you can help prevent the spread and protect your loved ones who may be more vulnerable to this illness. Although it may disrupt your life temporarily, practicing social distancing, avoiding gatherings of more than 250 people and limiting non-essential travel is crucial to containing the virus, and it's the fastest track to getting things back to normal.

If you're still tempted to keep on living as if nothing has changed, consider this: If we do not work together to contain the coronavirus to the best of our ability, our hospitals, clinics and health care workers will become far too overwhelmed to provide the necessary care to all those who become affected. The goal is to prevent a major spike of cases past our health care system's ability to keep up, consequently lowering the number of deaths across the country.

However, all this being said, it's equally important not to panic. With misinformation swirling around the internet and a lack of a comprehensive understanding about this novel disease, it's easy to work yourself up, or dismiss the severity all together. Be sure to get your information from a reputable source such as the Department of Health Services (DHS) or the Center for Disease Control (CDC), and stay up-to-date on this ever-changing situation.

No matter what you do, think about our state's most vulnerable citizens – your co-worker's child who is battling Leukemia, your friend with diabetes or your elderly parents and grandparents – before making any decisions that would result in you interacting with others.

Protect yourself, protect your loved ones and remain positive that we can get through this together as a state, as a nation, and as a world.

**This column was written on March 13, 2020. Recommended precautions may change as the situation evolves and more information about COVID-19 becomes known. Be vigilant about staying up-to-date by visiting [the Wisconsin DHS website](#).*

Jennifer Shilling serves as the Senate Democratic Leader and represents the 32nd District which covers La Crosse, Vernon, Crawford and parts of Monroe County.

MEDIA NOTE: See email attachment for an official photo of Sen. Shilling.

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