



Tony Evers

Office of the Governor | State of Wisconsin

VIA ELECTRONIC DELIVERY

December 21, 2020

Senator Devin LeMahieu
Senate Majority Leader-elect
Room 211 South
State Capitol
P.O. Box 7882
Madison, Wisconsin 53707

Representative Robin Vos
Assembly Speaker
Room 217 West
State Capitol
P.O. Box 8953
Madison, Wisconsin 53708

Dear Majority Leader-elect LeMahieu and Speaker Vos:

I have appreciated our conversations over the last several weeks, but have been disappointed there has not been a willingness to move forward on a bill yet this month. Unfortunately, as it does not look like our schedules are going to align to meet again before Christmas, I write today to put forward a commonsense compromise that includes the items on which all of us can agree and ask you to take it up without delay.

The initial proposal I sent to you was a reasonable one that attempted to find consensus, capture a number of needed provisions to aid our response, address the effects of COVID-19, and ensure that we have the resources allocated to respond to the ever changing needs during the pandemic. Following that proposal, both of you have put forward a list of ideas from your caucuses to consider as well. All parties have agreed there are items in each of our three proposals that we could support. As I have indicated in our conversations, there are several provisions in your proposals that are either unworkable, overtly political, or are items my administration has addressed or is already working to address, and you likewise have objected to several of the proposals that I have put forward, even some that were passed under Act 185 earlier this year.

It is time to move forward on provisions where there is agreement. As I have repeatedly indicated, the goal was to have a bill passed by mid-December, but was willing to give you additional time to speak to your caucuses to find a united, bipartisan approach. However, we now face the end of the year, and a bill has not yet been passed. In the interest of reaching a timely agreement on these pressing issues, I am willing to make compromises and find middle ground to reach a bipartisan agreement. To be clear, this list is not perfect. I would certainly hope for more support to our state's continued response to the pandemic, and it is unfortunate there seemed to be no appetite from your caucuses on other items such as ensuring those impacted by COVID-19 aren't evicted from their homes, requiring insurers to cover all telehealth services, easing work search requirements for those who have lost their jobs and can't find new work, and making it easier for healthcare workers exposed to COVID-19 to claim workers compensation.

With the importance of these issues only increasing and the new year approaching, compromise by all parties is necessary, which is why not everything we each brought to the table, respectively, is included in the list below. Moving forward on these provisions results in a piece of legislation that responds to some of the needs of Wisconsinites. Therefore, I believe we must forward with a bill based on the items we can agree on, and it is imperative that the Legislature do so expeditiously.

To this end, I have prepared a bill that includes provisions on which we have been able to find some agreement:

- Employee transfer authority;
- Authorize trust fund loans to municipal utilities;
- Rehired annuitants in critical positions;
- Health services providers from other states;
- MA payments to hospitals for nursing facility level of care;
- MA payments for outpatient hospital services;
- MA coverage of COVID-19 testing and vaccinations administered by pharmacists;
- Coverage of vaccinations under SeniorCare;
- No cost sharing for COVID-19 testing;
- Third-party logistics providers;
- Prescription drug limits;
- Out-of-network charges and payments during COVID-19 pandemic;
- Liability insurance for physicians and nurse anesthetists;
- Lease of broadband infrastructure;
- Extension of prescriptions by pharmacists;
- Authorize pharmacy students to administer SARS-COV-2 vaccines;
- Eligible volunteer or work activity for UWS and WTCS;
- UI – Plan to reduce processing backlog;
- UI – Call center hours[Additional dollars would be needed in order to fund the expanded hours];
- UI – Work-share;
- Waive the annual hour limit for LTEs;
- Extend Act 185 provisions related to cremation of bodies of persons who died of COVID-19;
- Allow JFC to Transfer up to \$100 million from sum sufficient appropriations.

I have attached to this letter an updated draft (LRB-6592) that reflects a compromise bill, and I am calling on both houses to convene and take up the proposal expeditiously and without delay. As always, I welcome additional feedback during the legislative process, but as I have continued to say, time is of the essence, and action must not be delayed any longer.

I have included a second bill draft (LRB-6522) that I hope your caucuses can have continued conversations about, and on which I hope we will be able to find common ground. While it is clear from our meetings that your caucuses are unwilling to include them in this initial package, the fact remains these items are necessary. As we have seen throughout the pandemic there are ever changing needs that have to be addressed which is why we really need your members to reconsider their position on my proposal for the use of state dollars, especially given many have clearly and publicly objected to receiving more resources from the federal government. The significant uncertainty that has been created by delayed federal action underscores the need to ensure that state dollars are authorized for pandemic response, so that the state has access to resources should federal aid be depleted in order to continue testing, purchase PPE, aid our healthcare workers, and be able to support struggling businesses across our state.

I hope your caucuses can also consider the provisions in the second bill that you had previously supported in Act 185 like suspending the one week waiting period, waiving in-person appearance requirements, and waiving student assessments. The UI provisions in the bill with provisions we agreed to coupled with the UI provisions in my initial proposal would help to ensure Wisconsinites receive their benefits as quickly and with as few barriers as possible.

Wisconsinites are demanding and deserve the legislature to reconvene and pass legislation that addresses the continuing needs of our response to COVID-19. I agree, and I hope at the very least this first compromise bill will be sent to my desk quickly and without delay, even if it means meeting during the next two weeks, and remain hopeful it will only be the first of several bills passed by the Legislature to support our state's continued response to this pandemic.

Sincerely,



Tony Evers
Governor