

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

April 2, 2020

President Donald J. Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We write to express support for Governor Tony Evers' request for a Major Disaster Declaration for the State of Wisconsin and its 72 counties to support our response to COVID-19.¹ As of March 31, 2020, COVID-19 has infected 1,351 Wisconsinites and led to 16 deaths in our state.² The Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) predicts that Wisconsin's hospital capacity could be exceeded at some point in April.³ COVID-19 has also severely impacted our state's industries: the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development reports increases of unemployment assistance claims by 4,670% in the Food Preparation and Serving Related occupations and 7,750% in the Personal Care and Service occupations.⁴

Wisconsin was proactive early in the COVID-19 response. In late January 2020, the state began coordinating closely with local health departments and federal partners, and asked "health care providers to alert [the Wisconsin] (DHS) if a person with recent travel to Wuhan, China has become sick with fever or respiratory symptoms."⁵ By early March 2020, our state built capacity to conduct tests for the COVID-19 virus at the Wisconsin State Laboratory of Hygiene at the University of Wisconsin-Madison (State Lab) so that tests could be identified as presumptively positive by the State Lab before being sent to the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention for confirmation.⁶ On March 12, 2020, Governor Evers declared a public health emergency due to COVID-19 and directed the Wisconsin DHS and other state agencies to "take all necessary and appropriate actions."⁷

On March 13, 2020, recognizing the growing severity of the crisis throughout the country, you invoked section 501(b) of the Stafford Act to extend federal assistance to all states,

¹ Office of Governor Tony Evers, *Gov. Evers Requests Presidential Disaster Declaration in Response to COVID-19 Pandemic*, Mar. 31, 2020, <https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/WIGOV/bulletins/2842a92>.

² Wisconsin Dept. of Health Services, *Outbreaks in Wisconsin* (data as of Mar. 31, 2020), <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/outbreaks/index.htm>.

³ Office of Governor Tony Evers, *Gov. Evers Requests Presidential Disaster Declaration in Response to COVID-19 Pandemic*, Mar. 31, 2020, <https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/WIGOV/bulletins/2842a92>.

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ Wis. Dep't of Health Serv., *State Health Agency Responds to the 2019 Novel Coronavirus Outbreak*, Jan. 27, 2020, <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/news/releases/012720.htm>.

⁶ Wis. Dep't of Health Serv., *Wisconsin Now Conducting Test for COVID-19 Virus*, <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/news/releases/030220.htm>.

⁷ Office of Governor Tony Evers, *Gov. Evers Requests Presidential Disaster Declaration in Response to COVID-19 Pandemic*, Mar. 31, 2020, <https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/WIGOV/bulletins/2842a92>.

tribes, territories, and the District of Columbia. You explained that, “the disaster is of such severity and magnitude nationwide that requests for a declaration of a major disaster as set forth in section 401(a) of the Stafford Act may be appropriate.” You further “encourage[d] all governors and tribal leaders to consider requesting Federal assistance under this provision of the Stafford Act,” and stated you “st[oo]d ready to expeditiously consider any such request.”⁸

As Wisconsin continues to fight COVID-19 with all of its effort and resources, we seek this crucial federal assistance to help in our fight. We respectfully ask you to review and consider this request.

Sincerely,



Ron Johnson
United States Senator



Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator



Bryan Steil
Member of Congress



Mark Pocan
Member of Congress



Ron Kind
Member of Congress



Gwen S. Moore
Member of Congress



F. James Sensenbrenner, Jr.
Member of Congress



Glenn Grothman
Member of Congress



Mike Gallagher
Member of Congress

CC: Peter T. Gaynor, Administrator, Federal Emergency Management Agency

⁸ The White House, *Letter from President Donald J. Trump on Emergency Determination Under the Stafford Act*, Mar. 13, 2020, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/letter-president-donald-j-trump-emergency-determination-stafford-act/>.