

The court decision striking down Wisconsin's Safer at Home order has imperiled our state's efforts to slow the spread of the coronavirus. If state lawmakers fail to act, they will endanger the health of thousands of Wisconsin workers, our families and our communities.

Proceeding without a comprehensive, evidence-based state response to the pandemic would cause further and irreparable harm, especially for front-line health care workers and other essential workers, many of whom reside in communities of color that have already suffered disproportionately because of the pandemic.

We call on state lawmakers to adopt clear policies that protect vulnerable workers and their families. Like the legislators who filed the litigation and the state Supreme Court justices who decided the case, Wisconsin workers should not be forced to return to workplaces if that would put their health and their lives at risk, and thereby increase risks for all Wisconsinites.

Specifically, we call on state policymakers to implement the following before expecting workers to return to their jobs:

- Adopting objective, evidence-based standards for relaxing social isolation policies as the pandemic eases and for restoring the social isolation policies if or when the number of cases climbs.
- Ensuring access to COVID-19 testing for everyone, without cost-sharing.
- Providing access to appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) for everyone working outside their homes, and incentivizing businesses to allow remote work whenever possible.
- Providing clear guidance to employers on the minimum standards for protecting workers and the people they serve, and a firm policy that workers cannot be required to return to workplaces that fail to meet standards established by the Centers for Disease Control and the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation.
- Ensuring that workers will not become ineligible for unemployment insurance benefits if they refuse to return to work because they are ill with the coronavirus, caring for a family member ill with the virus, unable to find child care because of the virus, or if they are at high risk if they become infected, or they are caring for someone at high risk.

If workers are effectively forced back to work without these minimum safety measures, any economic benefit will be short-lived and the spike in cases will set us back even further.

The Legislature explicitly asserted that they have the authority to protect Wisconsin's people and its economy. The State Supreme Court agreed with them, and overturned the extension of the Safer at Home order, which nearly 7 out of 10 Wisconsinites support. Now the Legislature must shoulder the burden that they asked for and take responsibility for the millions of people, hundreds of thousands of small businesses, and our health care systems, all of which are more vulnerable now than they were before this court ruling.