May 21, 2020

Dear Wisconsin Lawmaker,

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 are people of color who 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:

- Adopt 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.
- Ensure access to COVID-19 testing for everyone, without cost-sharing.
- Provide access to appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) for everyone working outside their homes, and incentivizing businesses to allow remote work whenever possible.
- Provide 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.
- Strengthen and clarify the current protections in unemployment insurance law that enable workers to maintain their eligibility for UI 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.

9to5, National Association of Working Women
ACLU of Wisconsin
African American Roundtable
Community Advocates
End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin
EQT By Design
Feeding Wisconsin
GRandparents United for Madison Public Schools (GRUMPS)
Kids Forward
Lutheran Office for Public Policy in Wisconsin
Madison Area Urban Ministries
NAACP of Dane County
nINA Collective
The Center for Media and Democracy
The Foundation for Black Women’s Wellness
Voces de la Frontera
Warmline Inc.
Wisconsin Alliance for Excellent Schools
Wisconsin Alliance for Women’s Health
Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault
Wisconsin Conservation Voters
Wisconsin Council of Churches
Wisconsin Faith Voices for Justice
Wisconsin Public Interest Research Group (WISPIRG)
Wisconsin Voices
WISDOM
Worker Justice Wisconsin
Youth Justice Milwaukee
Youth Justice Wisconsin