



WISCONSIN LEGISLATURE

P.O. BOX 8952 • MADISON, WI 53708

December 29, 2020

DELIVERED ELECTRONICALLY

Speaker Robin Vos
Room 217 West
State Capitol
PO Box 8953
Madison, WI 53708

Dear Speaker Vos,

We write to you regarding workplace safety procedures for the Assembly during the upcoming 2021-2022 session, following your discussion with Leader Hintz over the past several weeks.

As the Legislature has continued to navigate new requirements for conducting business during the pandemic, we appreciate your office's willingness to work with the Legislative Human Resources Office to allow staff the option to work remotely, and the ability of our members to participate in the April floor session and other subsequent committee meetings with a virtual option.

It is our position that these virtual options must continue to be available to our members, staff, and support agencies as we enter the new legislative session.

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to have devastating consequences for our state, and our situation has rapidly deteriorated in recent months. Last week, DHS reported all of Wisconsin's 72 counties having very high or critically high disease activity, and over 1,000 Wisconsinites hospitalized because of the virus, with hospitals across the state reporting only 21% of ICU beds available.

In short, we are currently operating in a period of the pandemic where the risk of transmission is exponentially higher than when we first instituted virtual options for the Legislature back in the spring. While our responsibility to conduct the work of the Legislature and serve our constituents has never been more important, executing that responsibility absolutely does not need to come with increased risk of contracting and further spreading the virus to those around us.

Governor Evers issued an Executive Order that asked all employers with employees that can work from home to do so. There are many jobs that require a person to be at work in person, but ours is not one. Choosing to not safely work virtually -- when we have the ability -- unnecessarily increases the risk of transmission to everyone.

Furthermore, requiring the normal in-person work of legislators during the pandemic makes the State Capitol one of the most unnecessarily risky places to work. We know that being in the same room for a sustained period of time exposed to someone with COVID increases not only the risk of exposure, but the severity of the infection. Even with mask wearing, legislative hearings and floor sessions involve social interactions for lengthy periods of time in confined spaces that significantly increase the risk of transmission. The fact that mask wearing will not be required and unfortunately is being ignored by many members and staff makes our workplace even more unsafe.

Changing course and removing the virtual option for meetings is not only a dangerous and unnecessary risk to the health of our members, but to our staff, support agency staff, members of the press that cover our activities, and the public who are attempting to safely engage with their elected government. Furthermore, it sends the troubling message that now is a time where precautions we have all been taking to ensure our safety, and the safety of those we care about, can be relaxed or ignored.

As elected leaders, we are examples for our communities and our actions matter. We are asking our constituents to stay home whenever possible, wear a mask when they must go out, maintain social distancing, and use good hygiene practices to limit spread. It is imperative that we walk our talk by observing these same guidelines whenever possible, to keep ourselves and our communities safe and healthy.

Thank you for your time, and we look forward to a response on this important issue.

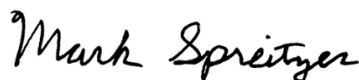
Sincerely,



Gordon Hintz
54th Assembly District



Representative Dianne Hesselbein
79th Assembly District



Representative Mark Spreitzer
45th Assembly District



Representative Lisa Subeck
78th Assembly District

Representative Kalan Haywood
16th Assembly District

Representative Beth Meyers
74th Assembly District

Representative Steve Doyle
94th Assembly District

Representative Daniel Riemer
7th Assembly District

Representative Sylvia Ortiz-Velez
8th Assembly District

Representative Marisabel Cabrera
9th Assembly District

Representative David Bowen
10th Assembly District

Representative Dora Drake
11th Assembly District

Representative LaKeshia Myers
12th Assembly District

Representative Sara Rodriguez
13th Assembly District

Representative Robyn Vining
14th Assembly District

Representative Supreme Moore-Omokunde
17th Assembly District

Representative Evan Goyke
18th Assembly District

Representative Jonathan Brostoff
19th Assembly District

Representative Christine Sinicki
20th Assembly District

Representative Deb Andraca
23rd Assembly District

Representative Don Vruwink
43rd Assembly District

Representative Sue Conley
44th Assembly District

Representative Gary Hebl
46th Assembly District

Representative Jimmy Anderson
47th Assembly District

Representative Samba Baldeh
48th Assembly District

Representative Lee Snodgrass
57th Assembly District

Representative Tip McGuire
64th Assembly District

Representative Tod Ohnstad
65th Assembly District



Representative Greta Neubauer
66th Assembly District



Representative Katrina Shankland
71st Assembly District



Representative Nick Milroy
73rd Assembly District



Representative Francesca Hong
76th Assembly District



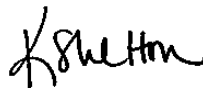
Representative Shelia Stubbs
77th Assembly District



Representative Sondy Pope
80th Assembly District



Representative Dave Considine
81st Assembly District



Representative Kristina Shelton
90th Assembly District



Representative Jodi Emerson
91st Assembly District



Representative Jill Billings
95th Assembly District