

STATE OF WISCONSIN

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Joint Committee on Finance

February 2, 2021

Governor Tony Evers
115 East, State Capitol
Madison, WI 53707
HAND DELIVERED

Dear Governor Evers:

Today is Groundhog Day. Each year, around this time, the Bill Murray movie by the same name reminds us that we can impact the future if we pay attention to the details of life. As the Co-Chairs of the Joint Committee on Finance (JFC), we are reaching out to you today to encourage you to focus on the details as you craft your version of the 2021-23 state budget proposal. We encourage you to reflect on Groundhog Day and avoid a repeat of your first budget proposal. We hope you will, rather, remember the details of the legislature's collaborative, responsible budget that you signed in 2019.

The legislature's last budget funded our priorities while respecting taxpayers. We made the largest investment in public education in history. We quadrupled funding for the Rural Broadband Expansion Grant program. We funded roads and transportation-related projects all over the state. We supported healthcare providers and increased reimbursements. We took care of families, children and seniors. We cut taxes for the middle class. We avoided non-fiscal policy and delivered a plan for the people of Wisconsin.

Despite the economic impacts and strain of the COVID-19 pandemic, last week's revenue projections were very positive. Wisconsin has the largest rainy day fund in the history of our state. All of these fiscal achievements are due to legislative Republican leadership, reforms and responsible budgeting over the last decade. We have funded our priorities, but we also spent within our means and we hope to see the same principles applied in the details of your next budget.

You have the immense luxury of starting your plan with an impressive surplus because we have made extraordinary efforts to protect the state's checkbook. But families and employers across the state have been struggling under the weight of government

shutdowns and the COVID-19 pandemic for nearly a year. They need us to pay attention to the details, now more than ever.

We respectfully request that you consider the sacrifices our citizens have made as you design the details of your budget. We can avoid a Groundhog Day scenario. Do not send the legislature another budget like your first budget that was full of tax increases, excessive spending and divisive non-fiscal policy. Our citizens deserve better. They want us to learn from the details of the past.

Your last budget included more than \$1 billion in tax increases. Your last budget increased state spending by more than 8%; the largest increase in nearly 20 years. Finally, your last budget included many divisive, non-fiscal policy items that should be discussed through the normal legislative process such as eliminating drug testing for welfare recipients, in-state tuition for illegal aliens and gutting common-sense, pro-growth reforms like right to work and the repeal of the prevailing wage laws.

Again, on this Groundhog's Day, we encourage you to consider the details of your budget that could change the future for Wisconsin. We encourage you to craft a responsible budget proposal that ensures we consider major policy issues through the public, transparent legislative process and spend within our means. Wisconsin families and employers have to do this every day and their state government should strive for the same goals.

Sincerely,



Howard Marklein
Senate Chair



Mark Born
Assembly Chair