



April 6, 2020

The Honorable Tony Evers, Governor  
Room 115 East  
State Capitol  
Madison, WI 53702

Dear Governor Evers –

It has recently come to our attention through member contacts and press reports that WEDC has taken the opinion that CBD shops and the retail sale of hemp and hemp products are non-essential businesses per Emergency Order #12, the Safer At Home Order. While we certainly appreciate and understand the enormous and unprecedented challenges Wisconsin is facing right now, we believe WEDC is misguided in its opinion and that hemp businesses are essential and therefore must not be required to close.

The current environment is causing considerable stress and anxiety for millions of people in Wisconsin. Many will turn to counseling, medications, depressants, etc. to cope and heal through all of this. We are very discouraged that those seeking CBD products to alleviate stress, anxiety, and many other ailments may not have the ability, in the safest manner possible and following DHS COVID-19 guidelines, to visit a local CBD store and get the advice and product they seek to help them with any physical, emotional or mental anguish they may be experiencing. In fact, they may even be precluded from doing so via mail order or internet sales.

We have also seen written correspondence from WEDC that informed a retailer "the retail sale of hemp and hemp products are non-essential". Many personal care product lines utilize hemp; including shampoo, lotion, salve, lip balm, beard oil, sunscreen, facial cream and cleanser, laundry soap, etc. Food and beverage products include, but are not limited to, hulled hemp seeds, cooking oil, flour, protein powder, energy bars, hemp 'milk', and granola. Even though product development is now limited due to infrastructure and supply chain constraints, hemp fiber can be used in thousands of applications, including bio-plastics, construction, animal bedding, clothing, automotive thermoset compression molding, paper, cardboard, packaging material, flooring, hempcrete, supercapacitor batteries, etc.

WEDC's opinion also calls into question what the thousands of hemp farmers in Wisconsin are allowed to do as we rapidly approach the beginning of the outdoor growing season. May farmers purchase seeds and clones for planting and cultivation? For this season's production of hemp, is the transport and movement of seed/clones, fertilizers, farm equipment and employees non-essential? Does hemp

greenhouse production have to shut down? Can growers sell and transport hemp fiber bales to processors? WEDC's opinion has many people asking these questions.

The Safer at Home Order specifically lists stores that sell medicine, food, household consumer products such as personal care products, and building and construction supplies as "essential businesses" that may stay open during this crisis if certain criteria are met to keep customers safe. The Order also specifies that farming and other production agriculture, including cultivation, marketing, production, and distribution of goods for consumption are exempt from the Order. We hope that the initial guidance from WEDC related to the impacts of the Order on hemp production and products is explained by a simple lack of information about the breadth and diversity of products produced from hemp, and we hope that this letter provides the information needed to rectify this issue. However, if the state continues to treat hemp-related businesses as anything less than essential it will be arbitrarily treating hemp as a second-class agricultural commodity and it will be picking winners and losers for certain essential products and materials based solely on the fact that some contain hemp-derived ingredients.

In the past, you have shown strong support for the emerging hemp industry in Wisconsin and the benefits that it can provide for our citizens and our economy. You have emboldened us and reinforced the value in the success that we and others have had in legalizing hemp and hemp-derived products over the last three years. On February 18, 2019, you stood in the Capitol rotunda and spoke these words:

*As a cancer survivor I know the side effects of a major illness can make everyday tasks a struggle. For many Wisconsinites, things like medical marijuana or other products like CBD oil can help alleviate chronic pain from debilitating medical conditions, reduce symptoms for things like anxiety, and even help folks cope with things like PTSD.*

*I believe and I know the people of Wisconsin overwhelmingly believe that people shouldn't be treated like criminals for accessing medicine that can change or maybe even save their lives. That's among the many reasons why I'm announcing today that it's time for Wisconsin to join the more than 30 other states and the District of Columbia in legalizing medical marijuana and ensuring access to CBD oil in Wisconsin.*

*I know many of you here today have been working on and talking about these issues for many years, and I want to thank you for your leadership and your advocacy. But I also want to make this clear, this is not just about access to healthcare...*

*At the end of the day this is not a Republican or Democratic issue. Wisconsinites overwhelmingly agree that access to medical marijuana, CBD oil and decriminalization for small amounts of marijuana are critically important issues and I believe we can get this done..."*

Joining you that day was Steve Acheson, an Iraq War veteran who told his very personal story of spinal injury surgeries that led him to a whole host of drugs and opiates that were detrimental to his well-being. He found an alternative in cannabis and became a founding member of Wisconsin Veterans for Compassionate Care and a founding member of the South Central Wisconsin Hemp Cooperative. There are Steve Acheson's all over the state and they need access to safe, hemp-derived CBD products to alleviate anxiety, stress, inflammation, PTSD, and other afflictions that may ail them.

Governor, we respectfully request that you please ask WEDC to revisit its initial opinion on the status of CBD shops and the retail sale of hemp and hemp products in Wisconsin, and see them for the essential businesses they are for so many who need access to medicine, food, personal care products, building supplies, and many other uses. We've heard from many who have a hard time understanding why liquor stores and firearm and ammunition suppliers and retailers are deemed essential, while facilities that sell products with medicinal value and can actually improve one's health may not be. We don't have a reasonable response for them.

This issue requires immediate clarification for confused owners of retail establishments that sell hemp-derived products and for farmers who are ramping up final production plans for planting. As you are fully aware, people need access now more than ever to products that may help them through these troubling times, and the agricultural community needs all the help it can get right now. Resolving this issue for hemp producers and those engaged in the hemp supply chain is desperately needed.

We appreciate your serious consideration of this request and please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions or concerns.

Thank you and stay safe!



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Wisconsin Hemp Alliance



Joe Bragger, President  
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and Manufacturers Association

CC: Missy Hughes, WEDC Secretary and CEO  
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