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STATE REPRESENTATIVE

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Safety of Schoolchildren Must be #1 Priority

We are beginning the fifth month since Governor Evers declared a health emergency in Wisconsin in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Unfortunately, the outbreak does not appear to be waning in the summer months. Wisconsin has seen a steady increase of the 7-day average of new cases since the conservative majority on the Wisconsin Supreme Court struck down Governor Evers' safer-at-home extension. When that order came from the Wisconsin Supreme Court, the 7-day average of new cases was 286 per day. As of July 21, the average has increased to 911 per day. Without the governor being able to extend his safety order, and with Wisconsin Republicans flat-out refusing to convene the legislature to consider bills to curtail it, the virus continues to worsen in Wisconsin.

The Republican's failure to act is having significant effects on the livelihoods and routines of Wisconsinites. Madison schools and Milwaukee schools have already declared they will be beginning the 2020-21 school year with virtual classes. Sun Prairie has followed suit, and I am sure more school districts will follow. In addition, the Big 8 Conference has announced that fall intraconference sports will not be taking place.

The absence of federal guidance in combination with the total abdication of any responsibility from Wisconsin Republicans is having real-life consequences. Many constituents have said that kids staying home for schooling in the fall is absolutely not feasible for them or their schedules. Unfortunately, we may be forced into virtual learning if we cannot contain the virus. We must act now. If we wait until just before the school year starts to take action we are not going to be discussing whether or not the school year will start virtually, we will be discussing whether or not the school year will be *finishing* virtually.

Ultimately, it comes down to what is safest for our schoolchildren. Virtual learning is inconvenient but hopefully temporary. To get kids back in school, we must absolutely have everyone wearing masks and practicing social distancing to prevent the spread of COVID-19. If we continue to take half-measures and not distance ourselves and not wear masks, there is no telling how long it is going to take to return to life as we knew it. Please be respectful of others and do your part to flatten the curve and help our country defeat the COVID-19 pandemic.

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