



November 30, 2020

Governor Tony Evers and Lieutenant Governor Mandela Barnes
PO Box 7863
Madison, WI 53707

Dear Gov. Evers and Lt. Gov. Barnes,

You have the unenviable task of proposing a new state budget for the coming two years in the midst of the uncertainty that a pandemic produces. We understand the impulse to play it safe but also know this is no time for an abundance of caution. Our state and country face enormous challenges even bigger than COVID-19. These emergencies—**economic inequality, health insecurity, social injustice and environmental insanity**—already have created deep and crippling divisions and if left unaddressed will lead to Wisconsin's and America's certain and steady decline.

Bold action is undeniably needed to start reversing the concentration of wealth in fewer and fewer hands, cure what ails our sick health care system, arrest climate catastrophe, and come to terms with chronic and systemic injustices in our society. We are painfully aware that Republicans who currently control Wisconsin's legislature and most statehouses throughout the country have been doing everything in their power to block any and all efforts to strike at the root of these emergencies. This is all the more reason to think big and act boldly in proposing a new state budget for Wisconsin. The moment demands a crystal-clear vision for tackling four dire threats to Wisconsin's health and welfare. We implore you to throw down the gauntlet to state lawmakers, make it vividly clear what our state needs to do and make Wisconsin an example for the nation to follow.

We offer six ideas on the following page for your consideration as centerpieces of a transformational state budget. All six are strong progressive policies that also have been embraced by voters in battleground states and Republican strongholds across America. On November 3, while Florida was voting to reelect Donald Trump and was voting out congressional Democrats like former UW-Madison chancellor Donna Shalala, voters there approved a ballot initiative increasing the state's minimum wage to \$15 an hour. Earlier this year, voters in Oklahoma, Nebraska, Idaho, Utah and Maine approved ballot initiatives expanding access to Medicaid in their states. In Arizona and New Jersey, where Joe Biden won, and in Montana and South Dakota, where Trump won, voters approved ballot initiatives legalizing marijuana for recreational use. Mississippi voters supported legalization of medical cannabis.

We totally understand the yearning for a return to something resembling normalcy. But given what's going on in our state and country and the enormity of the challenges facing us, this is not a moment that lends itself easily to unity and normalcy. We have to be bluntly honest with each other and

challenge one another, and that will mean conflict because the people of Wisconsin have very pronounced differences that have produced very real divisions. It's worth remembering that the unemployed want jobs, the hungry want to eat, the evicted want apartments, the foreclosed want to keep their homes and the sick want cures far more than they want political harmony.

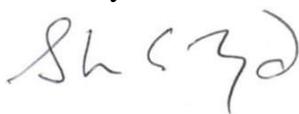
Motion **W**

Moving Wisconsin to a weconomy step by step

- 1 **Boost **W**ages** so when you work you aren't poor. Lift low-wage workers out of poverty by raising the state minimum wage in Wisconsin from \$7.25 to \$15 an hour.
- 2 **Reward **W**ork** by restoring taxation based on ability to pay so earned wages are taxed at a lower rate instead of a higher rate than unearned income such as capital gains and inheritances.
- 3 **Promote **W**ellness** by accepting federal Medicaid expansion funds and setting up a state health insurance exchange under the Affordable Care Act, correcting two mistakes Wisconsin made that most other states did not. Obtain federal waivers to make as much of the state's population eligible for BadgerCare as federal Medicaid rules allow.
- 4 **Wire Wisconsin** to close the digital divide and make the pandemic more manageable for everyone by bringing high-speed Internet connections to every doorstep in the state, allowing anyone anywhere in the state to work or run a business from home and for all our kids to be on an even footing for doing schoolwork.
- 5 **Wean Wisconsin** from reliance on fossil fuels by aiming for solar panels on every roof and committing Wisconsin to a climate action plan to achieve 100% renewable energy by 2050 or sooner, a 50% reduction in overall energy use by 2030 or sooner, and zero climate-disrupting air pollution emissions by 2050 or sooner. Commit at least 80% of economic development funding through the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation to initiatives in the renewable energy sector, which has been creating jobs nationally 12 times faster than the rest of the economy.
- 6 **Legalize **W**eed** for both medical and personal use. Tax legal sales by applying the state sales tax to purchases of medical marijuana and charging an additional excise tax on purchases for adult recreational use. Use proceeds—roughly \$200 million annually or \$400 million for the state's two-year budget—for health care access, broadband expansion and renewable energy investments.

We urge you to act boldly when you make your budget proposal. Wisconsin needs you to.

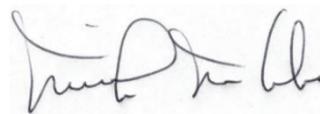
Sincerely,



Sarah Lloyd
Co-Chair



Charlie Ryan
Co-Chair



Mike McCabe
Executive Director