

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 3, 2020

The Honorable Scott Fitzgerald
Senate Majority Leader
Room 211 South, State Capitol
Madison, WI 53702

The Honorable Robin Vos
Assembly Speaker
Room 217 West, State Capitol
Madison, WI 53702

Dear Majority Leader Fitzgerald and Speaker Vos:

On Friday, March 27, 2020, President Trump signed sweeping coronavirus aid legislation into law, the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. Among the law's many provisions is a significant expansion of federal assistance for state unemployment insurance programs. Specifically, the legislation provides full federal reimbursement of workers' first week of unemployment insurance benefits. The reimbursement is only available to states that do not require a waiting week. Because Wisconsin law requires claimants to wait a week before they can receive benefits, the growing number of jobless Wisconsinites are not eligible for this federal assistance. Therefore, we urge you to change Wisconsin law to eliminate the one week waiting period to provide much needed financial assistance to Wisconsin's workers as quickly as possible and allow the State of Wisconsin to receive critical federal aid.

At a press conference on Wednesday, April 1, 2020, Majority Leader Fitzgerald indicated that beneficiaries who do not receive the first week's payment could receive it "retroactively" after the state legislature acts to waive the waiting period. This plan overlooks the intent of the federal reimbursement, which is to get assistance into the hands of out-of-work people as fast as possible. In addition, it is not clear that Wisconsin will be allowed to receive a full federal reimbursement for a payment that is not made during the beneficiary's first week of unemployment. The legislature's plan to delay action on the one week waiting period and rely on retroactive pay—without any assurance from the Department of Labor that it is allowed—unnecessarily risks the financial security of hundreds of thousands of Wisconsinites suffering through this time of record-breaking unemployment.

We are in the midst of an unprecedented public health crisis. As many workplaces have been forced to close to slow the spread of coronavirus, unemployment claims have increased dramatically and are expected to continue rising in the near-term. Over 250,000 unemployment claims have been filed in recent weeks. Every day that we wait we leave money on the table for cash-strapped Wisconsinites.

In closing, we urge you to act quickly to ensure that Wisconsinites who have lost their jobs are able to receive full unemployment insurance benefits immediately. Eliminating the one week waiting period will make a significant difference in the lives of Wisconsin's workers.

Sincerely,



Tammy Baldwin
U.S. Senator



Ron Kind
Member of Congress



Gwen Moore
Member of Congress



Mark Pocan
Member of Congress