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WisconsinGrocers.com

July 1, 2020

Gov. Tony Evers
Room 115 East
Wisconsin State Capitol
Madison, WI 53702

Secretary-Designee Andrea Palm
Wisconsin Department of Health Services
1 W. Wilson Street, Room 650
Madison, WI 53703

Delivered Electronically

Dear Governor Evers and Secretary Palm,

On behalf of the Wisconsin Grocers Association, representing Wisconsin's food retailers, warehouses and manufacturers, we are writing to express our concern with the Wisconsin Department of Health Services publicly disclosing the names of businesses with employees confirmed to have COVID-19.

Many of these businesses have been on the front line, working hard every day to make sure that food and other essential products are available to Wisconsinites while they were quarantined. They abided by all public orders, and went above and beyond in many cases to ensure that customers and employees were safe.

Publicly disclosing these businesses have had an employee testing positive for coronavirus will have significant public implications. Legally, the business does not need to report an employee that has tested positive, nor may they be aware that an employee has tested positive. Investigations are sparked through contact tracing, which works to pinpoint exposure, which may or may not be the workplace. By publicly disclosing these individual's employers it is implying that they were exposed to coronavirus on the job.

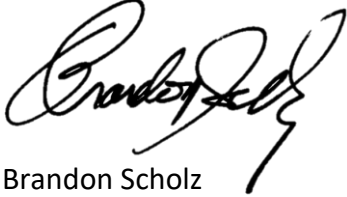
Currently, retailers work through their local health departments if an employee tests positive. These health departments have advised that it is not necessary to make a public announcement due to the number of cases already experienced in our state. Furthermore, CDC recommends that employers maintain confidentiality and publicly disclosing detailed information about confirmed cases makes it difficult to maintain an employee's privacy.

As essential businesses, our employees are face-to-face with the public, and therefore are at a higher risk for contracting the disease. This is the same situation as in hospitals, and the decision was made to not share the names of hospitals with employees that contracted the disease for this reason. So, why are businesses in similar circumstances going to be outed by the State for being an essential business and serving the public?

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We understand there are circumstances that necessitate sharing information publicly to ensure the public's health, but providing the names of businesses in this situation does not ensure the public's safety and only harms businesses already in a precarious situation and jeopardizes the privacy of our employees. Therefore, we ask that you reconsider this decision and not publicly disclose the name of businesses that are under investigation for an outbreak.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brandon Scholz", written in a cursive style.

Brandon Scholz
President & CEO