



# STATE OF MINNESOTA

## Office of Governor Tim Walz

75 Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. ♦ Suite 130 ♦ Saint Paul, MN 55155-1611

October 5, 2021

Dear Legislative Leaders,

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me today. I look forward to continuing to work together on the critical issues facing Minnesotans. As we discussed, given increasing COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations and a historic drought, we need to take action to provide relief for Minnesotans and keep our communities safe. As set forth below, I urge the legislature to address these urgent issues and be ready to pass essential legislation at a special session.

### **I. Frontline Worker Pay**

As you know, the Frontline Worker Pay Working Group has not reached agreement at this time. The path forward on delivering for our workers is to set aside political posturing and start doing the hard work of reaching agreement. We believe there are many workers who sacrificed and deserve pay and recognition, not the narrow universe outlined by the GOP last week. These heroes have waited long enough, let's get this done and get this money out the door in a special session.

### **II. Drought Relief**

Leaders in my Administration have been working with stakeholders and members from the House and the Senate on proposals to address needed drought relief for Minnesotans.

I have asked my Administration to continue to work with stakeholders and legislators on both sides of the aisle to formalize an agreed-on drought package for enactment during a special session. These proposals include bringing relief to livestock and specialty crop producers, dealing with the economic impacts of drought and wildfires, helping communities address water use and supply, and addressing forestry challenges that have impacted reforestation on state and private lands. This package can and should be enacted in a special session.

### **III. Pandemic Response**

Since the peacetime emergency ended in July, we have seen a significant increase in the number of cases and hospitalizations. The number of Minnesotans hospitalized for COVID-19 has already exceeded levels we experienced this past spring, and our current caseloads are more than double what we saw at this same time in 2020. At the end of last week, only two pediatric ICU beds were available in the entire state.

While my administration continues to adapt and respond to emerging issues due to the Delta variant, the legislature needs to address a number of issues to keep our students and teachers, families, workers, and communities safe. In the absence of a peacetime emergency, I urge you to move swiftly to reinstate waivers and enact other relief necessary to allow hospitals, nursing homes and childcare centers to respond to the virus more effectively. As we discussed, issues to be addressed include:

- Addressing Hospital Capacity by temporarily reinstating bed moratorium waivers

- Addressing Nursing Home Capacity by continuing temporary waivers related to non-layaway bed requirements
- Reinstating Mortuary Science Storage and Licensing waivers
- Allow for Nursing Home Transfer & Discharge by temporarily waiving resident notification timeframes
- Allow nursing homes to quickly expand bed options by temporarily reinstating the Nursing Home Non-Layaway Beds waiver
- Continue authorized CCAP Payments to Closed Child Care Providers when classroom needs to close due to COVID cases or exposure
- Provide Child Care providers with flexibility through temporary suspension of Staff Distribution Requirements
- Consider temporary waivers for medical professionals to address critical staffing needs
- Modifying requirements to maintain long-term services and supports by not requiring signatures for allowable remote assessments and case management visits
- Allowing flexibility for personal care assistance (PCA) service oversight by allowing qualified professionals to provide required in-person oversight via two-way interactive telecommunications
- Allow for verbal signatures on applications for assistance when county or tribal offices are closed or when there are concerns of COVID exposure or if there isn't access to internet

I also urge you to consider important policies necessary to keep our students and teachers, seniors, and communities safe as we tackle the fourth wave of this terrible pandemic.

- **Vaccine and testing requirements for teachers and school staff, and long-term care workers.** Minnesota can and should lead by expeditiously implementing these components of President Biden's announcement regarding vaccine requirements.
- **Consistent requirements for schools that help keep kids safely learning in the classroom, including parental notification of cases, isolation and quarantine, participation in testing and masking as well as other mitigation strategies.** Additionally, ensure that districts provide food and other essential services for each and every student when they are not able to hold in-person classes.

We look forward to your engagement and collaboration as we work to help frontline workers, provide needed drought relief, and keep Minnesotans safe during the pandemic. As in past situations requiring a special session, I stand ready to call a special session as soon as we reach an agreement. I urge you to act quickly so that together we can take swift action on these important issues.

Sincerely,



Tim Walz  
Governor