

April 20, 2021

To: The Joint Finance Committee

Cc: Governor Evers, Senate Majority Leader LeMahieu, Senate Minority Leader Bewley, Speaker Vos, Assembly Minority Leader Hintz, Members of the Legislature

Dear Co-Chairs Marklein and Born,

We thank you for providing a virtual public hearing and an email address to submit written comments, but we are disappointed in how limited the virtual hearing is. The April 28 virtual public hearing attendance, limited to 200 attendees statewide, filled up within 15 minutes of opening. This demonstrates the desire of Wisconsinites to provide verbal input in this important process and the need for additional virtual hearings.

“I’m disappointed with how the process to sign up to give testimony on the state budget has gone. Due to COVID concerns I was uncomfortable going to any of the in-person sessions. I was looking forward to signing up for the online one, but unfortunately couldn’t, due to it filling up so fast. Given the unique circumstances of this year, I hope the state legislature adds more virtual testimony options,” shared Jacqueline Beaulieu, one of the many residents who were unable to register for the hearing.

As [105 organizations wrote to you in February](#), “The state budget process is one of the most important policy discussions that legislators, the Governor’s staff, and advocacy groups engage in together. At the heart of the state budget is the belief that our state’s values are reflected in the decisions that are made about how we spend our state’s tax dollars. But, it is also true that robust public engagement in making these decisions is a value in and of itself.”

To provide opportunities for further public engagement, the 64 undersigned organizations request two additional, statewide virtual public hearings.

Thank you for your consideration,

1000 Friends of Wisconsin
350 Madison
A Better Wisconsin Together
AARP
ACLU of Wisconsin
African-American Roundtable
AFT-Wisconsin
All Voting is Local
Black Lives Matter to Wisconsin Unitarian Universalists
Citizen Action of Wisconsin
Citizen Advocates for Public Education - Lake Mills
Clean Wisconsin
Common Cause in Wisconsin

Disability Rights Wisconsin
End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin
EX-incarcerated People Organizing (EXPO)
Greater WI Agency on Aging Resources, Inc.
Harambee Village Douglas
InControl Wisconsin
Kids Forward
Madtown Mommas and Disability Advocates
Main Street Alliance
Midwest Environmental Advocates
Milwaukee County Human Rights Commission
Milwaukee Inner-city Congregations Allied for Hope (MICAH)
Milwaukee Turners
Mothers Against Gun Violence
National Lawyers Guild, Milwaukee Chapter
Northern Wisconsin NORML
People First Wisconsin
Planned Parenthood Advocates of Wisconsin
Progress North
Rid Racism Milwaukee
River Alliance of Wisconsin
Save IRIS
SEIU Wisconsin State Council
Sierra Club - Wisconsin Chapter
Souls to the Polls
Sun Prairie Action Resource Coalition
Survival Coalition of Wisconsin Disability Organizations
Sustainability Team, First Unitarian Society of Madison
The Arc Wisconsin
WI Cannabis Activists
Wisconsin Alliance for Excellent Schools
Wisconsin Board for People with Developmental Disabilities
Wisconsin Cannabis Activist Network
Wisconsin Coalition of Independent Living Centers
Wisconsin Conservation Voters
Wisconsin Council of Churches
Wisconsin Democracy Campaign
Wisconsin Education Association Council
Wisconsin Environment
Wisconsin Faith Voices for Justice
Wisconsin Farmers Union
Wisconsin Grassroots Network
Wisconsin Green Muslims
Wisconsin Health Professionals for Climate Action
Wisconsin Interfaith Power and Light
Wisconsin Network for Peace and Justice
Wisconsin Public Education Network
Wisconsin Wildlife Federation
WISDOM, Inc.
WISPIRG