



ILLINOIS HOUSE REPUBLICANS

May 18, 2020

Governor JB Pritzker
207 State House
Springfield, IL 62706

Dear Governor Pritzker,

As our state, and our nation has been grappling with the effects of COVID-19, the government response has understandably focused on protecting the public from the potentially deadly effects of the virus. Simple things we can quantify, like how many cases, how many deaths, and slowing the mortality rate have been the focus. However, there has been almost no discussion or response related to the devastating effects that ongoing social isolation is having on the mental and long-term health of individuals and families.

- **Suicide:** In March alone, calls to the national Disaster Distress Hotline jumped 891% compared to the prior year. A new study released by the Well Being Trust and the American Academy of Family Physicians estimates that “deaths of despair” could reach as high as 150,000. Schools that utilize Chromebooks equipped with “bark alert” systems to notify staff if a student researches information on how to commit suicide have seen a dramatic increase in alerts.
- **Substance Abuse:** National alcohol sales jumped more than 25% in the first week of April. The same study referenced above points to the fact that leaving the home for a job has a direct correlation to mitigating substance abuse behaviors. The problem is compounded further by those turning to alcohol and other substances to deal with the depression and anxiety brought on by long-term isolation.
- **Domestic Violence/Child Abuse:** Law enforcement agencies across the state are reporting a surge in domestic violence calls, but have also warned the real numbers are likely much worse. As child welfare advocates reported at the end of March, reports of child abuse dropped in the first two weeks of Illinois’ stay at home order for one primary reason – the #1 mandated reporter of child abuse are schools. The real number of abuse cases could be more than double.

As our state continues to grapple with protecting the public from COVID-19, we cannot continue to focus simply on the number of cases or lives lost as a direct result of the virus. We must begin to recognize that there is an underlying reality that the loss of jobs and livelihoods is directly linked to the negative effects that social isolation is having on the mental and long-term health of Illinoisans. The study noted above explicitly cited this fact, and research conducted by Harvard University on the Great Recession, as well as research conducted for the U.S. Treasury on the correlation between income and life expectancy paint a stark reality we must face.

According to that research, 260,000 treatable cancer deaths were a result of the rise in unemployment between 2008 and 2010. Equally, if not more troubling, those forced into poverty as a result of unemployment literally lose years off their lives. An average of fifteen years lost for men and ten for women.

The growth of the overall human toll linked to COVID-19 and its response can no longer be ignored. We must recognize how this is all intertwined and linked to the social isolation that has been prescribed. We must ensure our path forward finally takes a holistic approach to save not only the lives of those infected by the virus, but also the lives of those affected by the government's response.

Governor, as we have from the beginning, we stand ready to work with you.

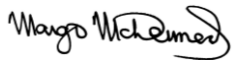
Sincerely,



Jim Durkin
State Representative – 82nd District



Bradley Stephens
State Representative – 20th District



Margo McDermed
State Representative – 37th District



Grant Wehrli
State Representative – 41st District



Amy Grant
State Representative – 42nd District



Keith Wheeler
State Representative – 50th District



Tom Morrison
State Representative – 54th District



Steve Reick
State Representative – 63rd District



Tom Weber
State Representative – 64th District



Dan Ugaste
State Representative – 65th District



Allen Skillicorn
State Representative – 66th District



Joe Sosnowski
State Representative – 69th District



Jeff Keicher
State Representative – 70th District



Tony McCombie
State Representative – 71st District



Ryan Spain
State Representative – 73rd District



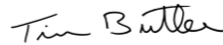
Dan Swanson
State Representative – 74th District



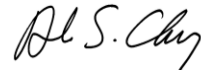
David A. Welter
State Representative – 75th District



Lindsay Parkhurst
State Representative – 79th District



Tim Butler
State Representative – 87th District



Andrew Chesney
State Representative – 89th District



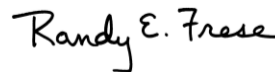
Tom Demmer
State Representative – 90th District



Mike Unes
State Representative – 91st District



Norine Hammond
State Representative – 93rd District



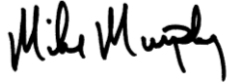
Randy Frese
State Representative – 94th District



Avery Bourne
State Representative – 95th District




Mark Batnick
State Representative – 97th District



Mike Murphy
State Representative – 99th District



C.D. Davidsmeyer
State Representative – 100th District



Dan Caulkins
State Representative – 101st District



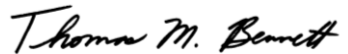
Brad Halbrook
State Representative – 102nd District



Mike Marron
State Representative – 104th District



Dan Brady
State Representative – 105th District



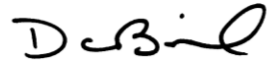
Thomas M. Bennett
State Representative – 106th District



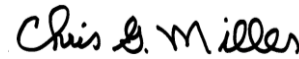
Blaine Wilhour
State Representative – 107th District



Charlie Meier
State Representative – 108th District



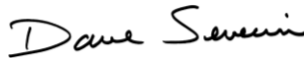
Darren Bailey
State Representative – 109th District



Chris Miller
State Representative – 110th District



Terri Bryant
State Representative – 115th District



Dave Severin
State Representative – 117th District



Patrick Windhorst
State Representative – 118th District