



## Washington State Legislature

May 29, 2020

The Honorable Jay Inslee  
Governor  
State of Washington  
PO Box 40002  
Olympia, WA 98504

Dear Governor Inslee,

We are writing to ask you to schedule and convene a special session of the Legislature. It is clear to us that executive mandates are no longer enough to address the devastation facing Washingtonians related to COVID-19. We have looked at the data and listened to the cries for help from the people who have been put in desperate situations through no fault of their own – unable to pay bills because they were forced out of jobs and cannot even rely on promises of unemployment benefits. We have concluded it is now the people’s turn to speak through their elected representatives, who must come together and govern as only the Legislature can.

In mid-March, just prior to adjourning as the state constitution requires, the Legislature took unprecedented action to set aside dedicated funding for the public-health emergency caused by COVID-19. We gave you the resources to help lead us through this challenge. Some ten weeks later, the original goal of “flattening the curve” has been realized, and Washington’s hospitals have not been overwhelmed. The fact that you are allowing an increasing number of counties to reopen signals that the public-health situation has evolved in a positive direction. Unfortunately, there is now an additional emergency at hand. While public-health concerns remain, our state faces an unprecedented economic crisis and a daunting budget problem stemming from the actions taken to protect public health.

We believe state government has an interest in protecting not only the lives but the livelihoods of Washingtonians. We also recognize the importance of minimizing threats to the services and programs that are important to so many people, especially the most vulnerable residents of our state. It is therefore essential for the legislative branch to meet in a special session and intervene, using the policy and fiscal authority granted under the constitution. For budgetary reasons, it would be most effective to begin a special session as soon as possible.

Our state government works best when all branches work together. The legislative branch has, as a whole, remained on the sidelines while you exercised your emergency authority. It is time for that to change. Our caucuses stand ready to continue working with your office and the executive branch in responding to this pandemic. We have no question, however, that the Legislature must now have a formal role in guiding our state's recovery. To that end we have proposed a framework and guidelines for a special session and encourage you to consider them. We want to work in a collaborative fashion with you and our majority colleagues in the Legislature to craft legislative solutions to help Washingtonians who are dealing with both the pandemic and economic desperation.

Sincerely,