

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 22, 2021

Governor Tony Evers
115 East State Capitol
Madison, WI 53702

Dear Governor Evers,

We write to express our concerns regarding your Administration's reclassification of 1,000 COVID-19 deaths. The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel reported that for months your Administration recorded that of the people who died from COVID-19, 26-30% were long-term care residents. Over the last two weeks, that rate significantly jumped to 45%.¹

The failure to accurately classify these deaths obscured the truly dire situation in Wisconsin's long-term care facilities. Had this information been accurately reported in real time, medical personnel could have targeted the limited supply of medical resources available to them toward long-term care facilities. Additionally, the state could have used this information to better inform the vaccination program and begun vaccinating residents earlier, possibly saving lives. The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel reports that the state has yet to provide information on 26% of COVID deaths, and as such, the true number of COVID-19 deaths in long-term care facilities remains unknown.²

Had Wisconsin Health Department Acting Secretary Andrea Palm, now President Biden's nominee for Deputy Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, followed the example of other states in reporting updated, real-time data to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidance, Wisconsin could have avoided the data shortfalls we see now.

In light of this new information, and your Administration's delay in vaccinating residents in assisted living facilities, we are concerned that Wisconsin's reputation as a leader in COVID-19 vaccine distribution has been diminished.

As Wisconsin's Federal representatives, we are also concerned that the state will not be able to provide accurate data regarding COVID-19 deaths to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Failing to provide accurate data obfuscates the true scope of the COVID-19 pandemic in Wisconsin. As our nation begins the process of returning to normal, it is more important than ever that states are reporting timely, accurate data to the Federal government.

¹ <https://www.jsonline.com/story/news/2021/03/18/wisconsin-undercounted-1-000-covid-19-deaths-long-term-care/4732428001/>

² Ibid

In order to ensure additional Federal relief money coming to Wisconsin is properly allocated by your Administration, we ask that you provide us with the following information:

1. Why are COVID-19 long-term care deaths not aggregated by nursing homes and assisted living facilities?
 - a. Why was Wisconsin unable to collect this data in real time when other states were able to do so?
2. Why did it take your Administration months to update this data and reclassify 1,000 COVID-19 deaths?
3. When will information about the remaining 26% of deaths be released?
4. What criteria does the State use to determine if a COVID-19 death was a long-term care resident?

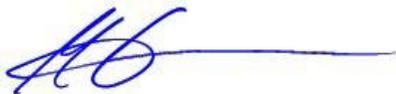
Sincerely,



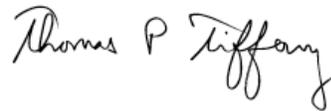
Scott Fitzgerald (WI-5)
Member of Congress



Bryan Steil (WI-1)
Member of Congress



Mike Gallagher (WI-8)
Member of Congress



Tom Tiffany (WI-7)
Member of Congress



Glenn Grothman (WI-6)
Member of Congress