

GOVERNOR'S VETO MESSAGE

April 8, 2022

To the Honorable Members of the Assembly:

I am vetoing **Assembly Bill 912** in its entirety.

This bill limits the use of emergency powers during emergencies.

I am vetoing this bill in its entirety because I object to the Legislature potentially preventing small businesses from receiving targeted relief and resources designed specifically to support small, family-owned businesses during an economic emergency, and I object to potentially having to use economic relief programs designed for small, family-owned, and main street businesses to support big box corporations.

Economic crises often have disproportionate effects on small, main street businesses compared to larger corporations and big businesses. To this end, a state's immediate economic relief and recovery efforts must make intentional and targeted investments to support local main streets and economies that otherwise might not be able to leverage economic resources to the same extent as large, corporate counterparts. See, for example, my administration's "We're All In" small business grant program announced in May 2020 to respond to the coronavirus pandemic, which was funded through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act. Our program invested \$75 million in the early days of the pandemic to provide \$2,500 in cash grants to help businesses with cost interruptions or health and safety improvements, paying worker salaries and wages, rent and mortgages, and inventory. These grants were critically important in helping small businesses across our state and were specifically targeted to go to small businesses with 20 or fewer employees.

Investing specifically in Wisconsin small businesses has been a central focus of our economic relief and recovery efforts during a state of emergency. The "We're All In" grant program referenced above was just one of many I have implemented to specifically provide targeted resources and assistance in response to this economic crisis. In fact, my administration has been proud to be a national leader in the share of the federal aid we have directed to economic development and small business support. An analysis conducted in November 2021 found Wisconsin ranked second in the country for aid we have directed to economic development and first in the country in aid, we have allocated to businesses. During this pandemic, we have helped more than 100,000 small businesses, including helping more than 3,400 small businesses open up storefronts in all 72 counties.

Clearly, many of these programs were directed to help small businesses, not big box corporations.

This bill would have potentially forced us to reduce or even eliminate altogether some of the economic support programs we ultimately devoted to our small businesses, instead requiring us to provide the same economic support to big-box corporations as well—no matter how big they are or how much money they have—to the significant detriment of Wisconsin's small businesses that desperately needed our help. Under this bill, any future state action relating to an emergency must be applied to all businesses uniformly, which could prevent the state from responding to an emergency by providing targeted resources to specifically help small businesses without necessarily providing those same resources to big box corporations, too.

I am concerned that, under this bill, the state would not be able to implement future economic relief and support programs designed to help small businesses without having to provide the same support to big businesses and corporations that likely do not need that same support as main street businesses in an economic crisis. We prioritized using our federal pandemic aid to go to small businesses rather than big-box businesses and corporations in recognition of the fact that most small businesses do not have the economic reserves, resources, and leverage big businesses and corporations do that are necessary to weather and survive economic turbulence.

Respectfully submitted,
TONY EVERS
Governor