



Office of the President

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VIA EMAIL

December 17, 2020

Robert R. Redfield, M.D.  
Director, Centers for Disease Control

Deborah L. Birx, M.D.  
Coordinator, White House Coronavirus Task Force

Dear Dr. Redfield and Dr. Birx,

I write to provide an update and to thank you for your support of Wisconsin's effort to combat the COVID-19 pandemic. While the nation endures another spike in caseloads, Wisconsin cases have dropped precipitously since mid-November, as noted in the attached chart tracking daily new cases.

Our surge testing program, encouraged and supported by you, was announced on November 4, and began in full force at all our University of Wisconsin (UW) institutions the following week. In Wisconsin, the curve of cases - in contrast with the national trend - began a steady decline on November 17 following full implementation of surge testing made possible by your assistance.

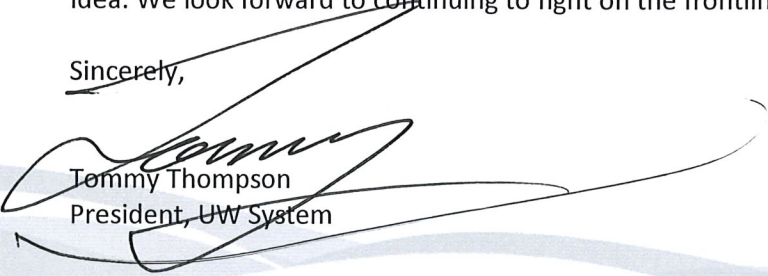
At this point, here in Wisconsin, we believe the nation's first surge testing program in partnership with the federal government, coupled with an active messaging campaign, have helped dramatically reduce cases. Through this program, we have administered over 135,000 free, rapid COVID-19 tests made available to all Wisconsinites. Furthermore, the media attention garnered by the program created a greater public awareness of the need to adopt safe behaviors in accordance with CDC guidelines.

The results, now seen statewide, reflect what we have experienced with our earlier and ongoing testing program for UW students, now in its fourth month. While we were confronted with challenges early in the academic year, positivity rates among our students halved in September when implementing tests and instilling a culture of responsibility at our campuses. Today, our rates are around 2%, significantly below state averages. We believe our campuses, through a combination of aggressive testing with over 330,000 tests administered, and a proven commitment to responsible behavior, have demonstrated that we can increasingly deliver in-person classes safely.

Again, our surge testing program has made a significant difference for all Wisconsinites. We are hopeful that this testing will continue and are confident that the UW will remain part of the solution to protect the health of our residents and communities statewide.

Thank you for your commitment to helping us serve the state of Wisconsin as we renew the Wisconsin Idea. We look forward to continuing to fight on the frontlines in the battle against COVID-19.

Sincerely,



Tommy Thompson  
President, UW System

# New confirmed COVID-19 cases by date confirmed, and 7-day average

Updated: 12/16/2020

