



107TH DISTRICT
STATE CAPITOL
P.O. BOX 30014
LANSING, MI 48909-7514

MICHIGAN HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

LEE CHATFIELD
SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE

PHONE: (517) 373-2629
FAX: (517) 373-8429
LeeChatfield@house.mi.gov
www.RepChatfield.com

April 4, 2020

The Honorable Christine Greig
House Democrat Leader
167 Michigan State Capitol Building
Lansing, MI 48933

Dear Leader Greig:

In light of the rapidly evolving situation surrounding the spread of the coronavirus, the changing directives coming from state officials, and the state of emergency declared by both Governor Whitmer and President Trump, the Michigan House of Representatives will continue to do its job and stand ready to address this pandemic on behalf of the people we represent.

For centuries, Americans have always relied on their elected leaders in times of crisis, and it is our responsibility to live up to that expectation. We are entrusted by the people of this state to serve and to place the needs of others above ourselves. You and I will not abdicate that responsibility now.

You are well aware of how important a role that the Michigan House is currently playing in the response to this disease. We recently gathered together to approve more than \$150 million in state funds for hospital equipment, staffing, testing and other mitigation efforts that are incredibly time sensitive as the number of infected residents continues to grow. The House has proposed dozens of revisions to executive orders, many of which have been adopted and helped shape the state's response to this crisis. I have also personally spent countless time discussing and planning the state's response to the coronavirus with the governor, health officials, hospitals, and the state's chief medical examiner. No one – Republican or Democrat – should be under the impression that work is now done.

The governor's executive orders in particular are going to continue to have significant ripple effects on our state and the millions of people who live here. We simply cannot abdicate our responsibility to work with her on improving that situation and helping the people we represent. Since 1977, there have been thirty-five states of emergencies and fifty-two states of disaster declared by the governor's office. In total, four states of emergencies and six states of disasters have been extended by the Legislature. None of these emergencies or disasters have been extended unilaterally by the governor, reflecting the twenty-eight day limit written into state law.

Executive Order 2020-33 did not restart the twenty-eight day timeframe required by statute and make a legislative extension on April 7th unnecessary. By its own terms, that order is merely an "expansion" of the original declaration and thus subject to the same time constraints. Your interpretation results in an obvious absurdity – that any governor could just revise and reissue declarations in perpetuity, rendering the clear language of the law and the legislative branch meaningless. The idea that the Legislature

cannot determine the length of an extension is also inaccurate, without precedent and contrary to both state law and logic.

The governor's declaration will expire on April 7th, and it is our responsibility to consider an extension. Doing so until May 1st will allow the governor to continue her important work while still giving local residents hope that they will have a real plan presented to them sooner than the end of June.

The people you and I represent deserve answers as to why the state shut down their jobs but can't adequately provide them with unemployment benefits. They deserve better transparency on the spread of the illness and how far testing has progressed. And they deserve to know what the state's plan is for getting them back to work and getting life back to normal. Those questions demand real, tangible answers before we simply sign away their jobs, their freedoms and their way of life until the middle of the summer. The Michigan House has been asking those questions, and we will continue to raise them until the people of Michigan have peace of mind.

You have also been made aware of the screening procedures in place for Tuesday. As you already know, the House has a comprehensive plan in place that mirrors guidelines established by the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services and the Centers for Disease Control, including symptom and temperature checks. Every possible measure will be taken to minimize the risk of exposure to legislators and staff as they do what millions of other Michigan residents are doing every day and show up to perform an essential service.

Of course, any elected official who feels unsafe will need to do what they feel is best, and directions will be sent out shortly informing members who have had either symptoms or contact with possible COVID-19-positive residents to stay home. But the people of Michigan rightly expect us to do at least as much as they are doing in these difficult times. Millions of Michiganders who are unaffected are showing up for work every day to keep our state moving. We've seen nurses, doctors, police officers, firefighters, grocery store workers and many more answer the call to serve throughout these tumultuous times. I don't intend to leave them hanging. They haven't put the state on hold, and we are not going to put their immediate needs on ice.

Leading by example also includes stepping up and taking action in challenging times. That is the job we asked for and the responsibility we now have to fulfill. The right thing for all of us to do is to continue leading and helping the people of this state get through this difficult time with as many answers, resources and solutions as we can. I ask you to join us next week as we continue that important work.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lee Chatfield". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Lee Chatfield
Speaker of the House
Michigan House of Representatives