



RESOLUTION # 44-12/20

TO: HONORABLE MEMBERS OF THE LA CROSSE COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

ITEM # 12-14

BOARD ACTION

Adopted:
For: 16
Against: 12
Abstain: 0
Abs/Excd: 1
Vote Req: -
Other Action: -

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE ACTION

Adopted:
For: 7
Against: 1
Abstain: 1
Abs/Excd: 0

RE: REIMBURSEMENT AND RECOGNITION OF ADDITIONAL COSTS INCURRED BY COUNTY EMPLOYEES DURING 2020 DUE TO COVID-19

WHEREAS, in December 2019 a novel strain of coronavirus known as COVID-19 was discovered. It was declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization, and the US Department of Health and Human Services, Governor Evers and the La Crosse County Board each made separate emergency declarations during the first quarter of 2020 which required major service changes, challenges and risks to employees at all levels of county government; and

WHEREAS, President Trump declared a national emergency on March 13, 2020, under the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act due to the spread of the coronavirus, which as a result of this declaration, employers may now provide tax favored payments to reimburse employees affected by the coronavirus for costs incurred as a result of its impact; and

WHEREAS, in order to address the imminent threat of the pandemic, the County temporarily scaled back most services in March, while redirecting more than 75% of all Health Department activities from other health priorities, while implementing emergency operating procedures through an incident command structure, dominating the activities of the Emergency Management Coordinator, Health Director, health managers and employees across multiple departments; and

WHEREAS, protecting clients has required revising most standard operating procedures at both long-term care campuses (Lakeview and Hillview), and significantly restructuring daily operations in the Jail and Juvenile Detention Facility; and

WHEREAS, the pandemic response has required extraordinary efforts by all county departments and employees to maintain county services, while redeploying resources in unprecedented ways, requiring employees to implement the means to perform work remotely, increase efforts to reduce operating costs and seek efficiencies, and balance increased work demands with their own family needs, including, but not limited to: caretaking, meeting increased financial challenges and responsibilities; and

WHEREAS, preliminary analysis through the 3rd Quarter of 2020 indicate that a majority of departments will underspend their approved budgets, while projected revenues will exceed original estimates and the county has maximized reimbursement of costs from federal CARES law funding, which indicates that the county should close year 2020 with sufficient funds to provide a reimbursement payment to employees for reasonable and necessary expenses resulting from the coronavirus pandemic; and

WHEREAS, La Crosse County recognizes that employees incurred additional costs as a result of the pandemic, including, but not limited to: medical expenses, including co-pays, deductibles, vitamins and supplements; increased expenses associated with being quarantined at home (utilities, groceries, home office expenses, etc.); increased childcare expenses; increased travel expenses; increased housing expenses for students returning home including duplicative meal expenses; expenses related to mental and physical well-being from social distancing; and enhanced office expenses to perform work at home during the pandemic such as internet connections; and

WHEREAS, the County Administrator recommends providing up to \$500 payment to each hourly or salaried employee as the most equitable means of providing reimbursement in recognition of the increased costs during these unprecedented times.

RE: REIMBURSEMENT AND RECOGNITION OF ADDITIONAL COSTS INCURRED BY COUNTY EMPLOYEES DURING 2020 DUE TO COVID-19

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the La Crosse County Board approves a one-time payment of up to \$500, including the five elected officials, Clerk of Court, County Clerk, Sheriff, County Treasurer and Register of Deeds, to reimburse for expenses incurred during the pandemic and this amount shall be adjusted for the amount of time the employee was impacted based on hours worked for the county and any employee may decline this reimbursement payment by notifying their supervisor.

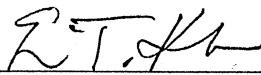
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, based on the written tax opinion provided by Ms. Mary Jo Werner, Partner at the accounting firm of WIPFLI LLP, La Crosse, WI, this one-time disbursement is considered to be a qualified disaster relief payment which shall not be treated as net earnings from wages or compensation subject to taxation to the extent that the reimbursement is for reasonable and necessary expenses resulting from the coronavirus pandemic and any expense that is not reimbursed by insurance or any other source.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this payment will not be included as taxable income on the employee's form W-2 and the County does not require any documentation of any specific costs, while encouraging employees to consult with their own tax advisor regarding this exclusion from taxable income.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLOVED, that the six highest compensated positions (Psychiatrist, County Administrator, Executive Director of Long-Term Care, Advance Practice Nurse Prescribers (2) and the Human Services Director will be excluded from receiving this reimbursement.

FISCAL NOTE: The total estimated cost of this tax favored reimbursement is approximately \$520,000 not subject to Social Security or Medicare tax or Wisconsin Retirement System for approximately 1300 employees, the vast majority to be covered from within the approved 2020 departmental budgets or with account transfers from contingency in March of 2021 at the close of the 2020 financial year.

Date: 12-17-20


RECORDING CLERK

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE CHAIR

	Reviewed Only	Recommended	Not Recommended
Co. Admin.	_____	_____	_____
Fin. Director	_____	_____	_____
Corp. Counsel	_____	_____	_____
Board Chair	_____	_____	_____

Requested By: Steve O'Malley
Date Requested: December 15, 2020
Drafted By: County Administrator

Adopted by the La Crosse County Board this 17 Day of December, 2020