

May 4, 2020

The Honorable Ron DeSantis  
Governor of Florida  
The Capitol  
400 S. Monroe Street  
Tallahassee, FL 32399

Re: Public Safety, Local Businesses, and Local Control

Dear Governor DeSantis,

The citizens of Marco Island thank you for your leadership during this difficult time for the state of Florida, the nation, and the world. Throughout your time as Governor, you have steadfastly supported the ability of local governments to make decisions for their communities in the face of attempts to reduce home rule authority.

Under those shared principles of leadership and local authority we, a city which overwhelmingly supported you in your race for Governor, reach out to you because our local community, our citizens, and our small businesses continue to suffer significant economic and psychological harm throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Your data-driven and fact-based approach promised significant relief as we approached the end date of Executive Order 20-91 (Safer-at-Home). During your masterful press conference announcing Phase 1 for Florida's Recovery (EO 20-112), you noted the many doom-and-gloom predictions that did not come true for Florida, pointing out our success in limiting the spread and severe negative effects of COVID-19. As you noted, local communities and citizens sacrificed much for the greater good, following the guidelines.

We reach out to ask you to permit a wider, although still limited, latitude as part of Phase 1, based on local conditions. All of Marco Island's businesses are essential to the livelihood of most of our working citizens. Our local businesses are generally small and family-owned, not franchises and not controlled by large corporations. Today, many are at significant risk of failing and disappearing. We strongly encourage you to place additional trust in us collectively, to make reasonable decisions in support of our local small businesses and workers by allowing local control and leeway to reopen businesses safely and appropriately beyond current Phase 1 limitations. These decisions would be based on local on-the-ground conditions, made in consultation with local health authorities, and to ensure proper safety of patrons, workers, and the community at large.

Our city, a unique tightly-knit island with two bridges connecting it to the mainland and a population ranging from 17,000 full-time residents to 45,000 in-season, has seen only 11 confirmed positive resident cases of COVID-19. No deaths have been confirmed within the city limits due to COVID-19. In all of Collier County with a population of 380,000, there are only 24

positive COVID-19 patients currently hospitalized. Our county hospitals are well-stocked with PPE, have significant bed and ICU availability, and are well prepared with unused ventilators.

With our city hotel occupancy rate at or below 5%, and enforcement of your suspension of vacation rentals “for the duration of the order,” we believe the highly seasonal nature of our city’s population supports our request for community action to prevent further economic devastation in the safest manner possible. No business will be required to operate. And no business will be allowed to operate with standards less stringent than those required for restaurants. We believe in individual choice and personal responsibility. Many others have lives to lead, families to take care of, jobs to be fulfilled, dreams and happiness to be pursued. We stand together in support of their inalienable rights and innate hope, now at risk of being snuffed out.

Please help us send a message of support to life, and to the living.

Respectfully,

Erik Brechnitz, Chairman, on behalf of  
Marco Island City Council

cc: Representative Bob Rommel  
cc: Representative Byron Donalds  
cc: Senator Kathleen Passidomo