



The Honorable Ron DeSantis
Governor of Florida
The Capitol
Tallahassee, FL 32399

5/7/2020

Dear Governor DeSantis,

Our state is facing an unprecedented crisis dealing with the effects of the global pandemic brought on by the Coronavirus. It has caused significant disruption to our way of life - schools have been closed, travel restricted and businesses large and small have been forced to work remotely or close their doors altogether. All of this has been to slow the spread of the COVID-19 virus and flatten the curve.

We would like to thank you and your team for the steadfast leadership you have shown guiding our state during this crisis. Your decisions have been targeted and based on the best available science and not the pressure of the media. Above all, you recognized that, unlike other states, Florida did not need a one-size-fits-all set of restrictions. In Northwest Florida, we have appreciated your recognition of our unique circumstances.

Now, that we are in phase one of the re-opening plan we are pleased that you continue to embrace a science, fact-based approach to getting our state back to work. Next to saving human life, getting main street open and back to work so that Florida families can get back on their feet should be the next most important focus of your team. This too should not be a one-size-fits-all implementation.

We would like to ask that you and your team carefully review the data in the Florida Panhandle. It represents a very low percentage of all cases in Florida yet, like areas with significantly higher numbers of people affected, much of the economy remains shut down, even under phase one of the re-opening plan.

Our economy relies on tourism. From our vacation rentals, to our eco-friendly camping, fishing, and hiking, in our area many of us rely on tourism and all the ancillary businesses that brings to make a living. From the hardware store, flower shop and real estate agent on main street to the bait shop or cleaning crew that maintains the vacation rentals, we need tourism so our families can thrive. Our hotels, motels, inns, and resorts are reopening while vacation rentals are singled out. They employ and directly impact so many in this region, yet will be unable to handle a second consecutive month with zero income. If it is not allowed to return soon, operating under strict social distancing and CDC guidelines, we fear that many of our constituents will suffer even more devastating losses than they already have. The Panhandle is resilient. We've overcome significant disasters in the past decade: the BP Oil Spill, Hurricane Michael, the NAS Pensacola Shooting and forest fires. We cannot allow an invisible threat and government intervention to be the disaster that brings it to its knees.

Again, we want to thank you for your steadfast leadership during this crisis. As you continue to re-open Florida safely, we would be grateful if you would look closely at the evidence supporting local control and decisions in less impacted regions. Sincerely,

Rep. Mike Hill – HD1 Rep. Alex Andrade – HD2 Rep. Jayer Williamson – HD3 Rep. Mel Ponder – HD4

Rep. Brad Drake – HD5 Rep. Jay Trumbull – HD6 Rep. Jason Shoaf – HD7