



May 5, 2020

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

RE: Executive Order 20-112

Dear Governor DeSantis,

I am writing this letter of support from the Destin Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors on behalf of the Okaloosa County Tourist Development District and the licensed professional vacation rental management companies in Okaloosa County, Florida. In light of the reopening of the economy, I think it is important to continue to evaluate the scorecard of performance on a regional versus statewide approach. With the different industries across the State, you certainly have a tough job at determining what industries should be opened, and at what level. Additionally, our region, Northwest Florida, one of the largest private economic drivers is the tourism industry that is made up primarily of professional vacation rental management companies. In Okaloosa County, approximately 11,000 of our 14,000 (78.5%) or our lodging units fall into the vacation rental category. We believe the vacation rental units are similarly positioned in other panhandle counties and are by far, the dominant visitor lodging establishment in the Florida Panhandle. Unlike other regions in the state, we have very little hotel and motel inventory, so in order for the ancillary businesses that rely on tourism to get a boost in business, they need tourists and the tourists need quality, clean vacation rental properties.

I thought I would give you the details to how the professionally managed vacation rentals are preparing our vacation rental units for occupancy. By getting all the vacation rental management companies, which we have, to commit to the same rigorous cleaning standards, we can ensure that all the safety precautions are taken to protect our local residence and tourists. Our hope is that we can open up the vacation rental management business prior to May 15. To that point, it is still troubling to us that hotels, motels, inns, resorts and timeshares have been allowed to operate since the guests, staff and standards across all operations are practically the same.

In addition to the cleaning standards, we are instructing all guests to bring and provide their own sanitation supplies and personal protection equipment. This will ease the strain on the local suppliers. Please help us open back up the Vacation Rental Business in the Florida Panhandle. If you look at the score card, there is no support for keeping them closed, especially if hotels, motels, inns, resorts and timeshares are allowed to operate. Please be fair and consistent in the turning on the economy, not discriminatory.

We would be interested to hear how our sanitation process compares to the hotel standards, especially considering there is no break of time between departures and arrivals. Finally, the hotel, motel experience includes areas within their facilities where social distancing is not possible, they all share common areas, unlike if you and your family rent a home, you never have to interface with anyone not in your family. Keep in mind that home and condominium rental duration periods are generally weekly whereas motels and hotel stays are generally rented for shorter periods, causing a greater strain and introduction of new tourists on the local residents. Please help Okaloosa County by removing the prohibition on vacation rentals ASAP. Thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'D. Moniz', with a stylized flourish extending downwards and to the right.

Dion Moniz, Hand Arendall Harrison Sale LLC
Chairman of the Board