

March 31, 2022

DELIVERED VIA EMAIL

The Honorable Ron DeSantis
Office of Governor
State of Florida
The Capitol
400 S. Monroe St.
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0001
GovernorRon.Desantis@eog.myflorida.com

Dear Gov. DeSantis,

As mayors from around the state of Florida we are asking you to veto SB 620, the Local Business Protection Act. We represent a diverse group of constituents who trust us to represent their interests and concerns. SB 620 would prevent our ability to uphold that privilege. This bill would prevent local governments from passing responsible and even popular local laws affecting the environment, housing, public health, vacation rentals, and more. Even worse, it would have a devastating impact on Florida residents, who would be forced to pay for lawsuits that businesses use to threaten local lawmakers.

As an example, if SB 620 had been in effect in 2020, Key West residents who voted to ban cruise ships with more than 1,300 passengers from docking at the city ports would have been subject to paying the cruise lines for lost business during the months the ban was in force. Florida TaxWatch, a business-backed research organization, has estimated that SB 620 would “lead to a number of financially motivated and malicious lawsuits, costing local governments over \$900 million annually” because local governments would be forced to increase taxes or reduce services to cover legal fees.

This bill gives too much leverage to local or multinational businesses in the creation and stalling of legislation designed to promote the public good in their community. It gives businesses the power to not only contest but also possibly force citizens to pay for what their elected local representatives chose to do, thereby dampening the desire for local laws. Local policies should be debated in public forums or elections rather than in courts.

Finally, SB 620 would be difficult to enforce and even harder for businesses to prove damages are from an ordinance, and not from competition from other businesses, new developments in society, or the markets. There are too many factors involved here and this bill rewards potential bad actors at the expense of the taxpayer.

As mayors, we recognize the vital importance of our local businesses and their contributions to our communities. They are the lifeblood of our local economies and are our neighbors. However, this bill sets the stage for abuse, more frivolous lawsuits, taxpayer dollars wasted. We need your help in combating this dangerous piece of legislation and protecting Floridians. As Mayors from across the state, we ask that you please veto SB 620. Our constituents depend on it.

Thank you for your time and attention to this critical issue.

Sincerely,

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