An open letter to:

The Honorable Ron DeSantis, Governor
Secretary Halsey Beshears, Department of Business & Professional Regulation

Gentlemen,

We need your help. The entire Florida Craft Brewing Industry is now in jeopardy. For the first time in recent history, the number of active breweries has actually decreased in number, and it is our fear that this trend will rapidly accelerate if we do not find a way to balance the health of our community with the economics of our industry.

The vast majority of over 320 small businesses, representing over 10,000 jobs, are existing solely on a “to-go” model for our products – this constitutes less than 10% of our collective sales and is an untenable model for our industry.

A handful of breweries are permitted under an exemption which allows breweries with a chapter 500 or 509 food license to operate for consumption on-premises. At one point, we were granted an exemption that allowed us to open so long as we partnered with a food truck — that exemption, regrettably, was eliminated under the latest order from the Department of Business & Professional Regulation.

The vast majority of breweries in Florida (approximately 90%) have been closed in 2020 for more days than they have been open. Those openings were only previously permitted under some type of exemption created by your administration. This is quite obviously unsustainable for our small businesses. As of the writing of this letter, our internal polling has revealed that we are likely to lose more than 100 breweries permanently if this continues for more than 2 weeks. Let us repeat that – more than 100 breweries in 2 weeks – and with that, nearly a third of the 10,000 jobs supported by our industry.

The Florida Craft Brewing Industry:
- Is a manufacturing industry first and retail second, but one cannot exist without the other;
- Is the #1 tool utilized by municipalities to gentrify areas in dying neighborhoods;
- Primarily serves our fans between noon and 8PM – our core is serving families and small gatherings – we are not nightclubs or your typical bar;
- Is unique in that we report to and are inspected by the U.S. Alcohol Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, Florida Division of Alcoholic Beverages & Tobacco, and the Florida Department of Health. The standards in our industry are extremely high. This is a direct result of combining our manufacturing role with human consumable retail.

The health of our community is paramount, but it cannot be at the life savings of hundreds of entrepreneurs, the livelihood of thousands of families and the majority of an entire industry. We will work with your administration in any way, but we MUST find a way to put our people back to work. Please help us put together a plan that safely re-opens our industry.

Thank you for your time,
All Members of the Florida Craft Brewing Industry