



CITY OF BELLEAIR BLUFFS

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May 7, 2021

The Honorable Ron DeSantis
Governor, State of Florida
The Capitol
400 S. Monroe Street
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0001

Re: Veto Request for CS/HB 403 Home-Based Businesses

Dear Governor DeSantis:

On behalf of City Commission of Belleair Bluffs in Pinellas County, we request that you veto CS/HB 403.

While the City of Belleair Bluffs support entrepreneurship, we must balance the desire to operate a home-based business with the potential impact on residential neighborhoods and residential property values. Zoning is an inherent function of local government. The primary purpose of zoning is to minimize incompatible uses and balance competing property rights. In practice, zoning is used to prevent new development or uses from unfairly interfering with existing uses.

The City of Belleair Bluffs has crafted common-sense requirements regarding commercial uses of residential properties. Local ordinances account for the differing impacts on residential uses posed by specific business uses within a community. For example, low-intensity uses such as professional offices may be compatible with residential neighborhoods in some cases, while high-intensity uses such as a repair yard or a 24-hour gym may not be compatible under any condition.

During this session, the City of Belleair Bluffs engaged in good faith negotiations with legislators and interested stakeholders to reach a reasonable compromise on home-based businesses. The result of those efforts was reflected in the Senate bill CS/CS/SB 266.

Unfortunately, the final product pending before you in CS/HB 403 drastically departs from this compromise. The bill was amended on the last day of session to remove essential elements needed to properly balance the desire to operate a home-based business with the potential adverse impacts on the property rights of surrounding homeowners. Key provisions supported by the League of Cities that were included in CS/CS/SB 266 but were not included in CS/HB 403 include:

- The ability for local governments to set common-sense limitations on hours of operation. CS/HB 403 prohibits local governments from regulating a home-based business differently from other businesses in a commercial zone. The hours of operation for a business in a commercial district may not be appropriate for a business in a residential neighborhood.
- The ability for local governments to place limits on business signs, exterior storage and traffic generated by a home-based business. Again, these types of matters should be tailored to the residential setting where a home-based business operates rather than defaulting to the same regulations used in commercial or industrial zones.
- The ability for local governments to prohibit business activities from occurring within view of the street.


The passage of CS/HB 403 was extremely contentious in the Florida Senate, where on the last day of the 2021 Session, the bill narrowly passed on a 19-18 vote. In a clear violation of Senate rules, three senators who were present in the Senate chamber failed to record a vote. The Senate subsequently requested the House return the bill to allow the Senate to take a valid vote. The House adjourned sine die prior to responding to the Senate's request.

If allowed to become law, CS/HB 403 will be a significant preemption of Home Rule powers and the ability of local government to balance competing property rights. Additionally, the bill will void existing local ordinances or regulations that have tailored unique solutions to homeowner and business concerns.

The City of Belleair Bluff Commissioners were elected to represent the will of the residents of Belleair Bluffs. This law goes against many of the current Code of Ordinances that the public had a legal voice in passing. They presented at Florida Statute mandated public hearings and approved Commission passage of these laws. The financial impact these changes will have by forcing the amendment of our current laws, the possible confliction with the current state adopted Comprehensive Plan and the disturbance to the residential areas are very troublesome. The business community is also conflicted since they pay high rent for store frontages, liability insurance, state licensing that will not be considered for Home Based Businesses.

For these reasons, the City of Belleair Bluffs City Commission requests you veto CS/HB 403. Thank you for your leadership and your consideration on this matter.

Respectfully,



Mayor Chris Arbutine