Dear Governor DeSantis,

We are the Boaters’ Rights Advocacy Coalition, a group of boating and cruising organizations that comprise almost 20,000 boating members. We advocate for boating safety and anchoring rights throughout the United States with special emphasis on Florida. We urge you to veto Florida House Bill 481, termed “Anchoring Limitation Areas”.

Florida considers the seafloor throughout the state to be held in the Public Trust. This is managed by a group appointed by the Governor, and which administer this seafloor in the public interest. Florida has never granted local municipalities control over the seafloor, as HB481 attempts to do. This is a significant departure from the principles of the Public Trust doctrine and is unwarranted by the circumstances we face today.

Existing Florida law, specifically Statute 327.4108, grants counties the right to establish Anchoring Limitation Areas (ALAs) subject to FWC approval and with reasonable restrictions. In places like Hollywood, Broward County established ALAs to address the problem of abandoned and long-term stored boats in the North Lake and South Lake anchorages. Prior to establishment of the ALAs these spots were full of abandoned boats which could easily wash onto private property during storms or when their anchors failed. After establishing these anchorages as ALAs the abandoned and long-term stored boats have been legally removed, and the problem has been resolved. It is clear that our existing statute is effective and does not need to be changed.

There is a significant problem with derelict and long-term stored boats in the waters off Miami Beach. The City of Miami Beach has destroyed some docks commonly used for shore access and banned landing nonresident boats and dinghies at their shoreline in an attempt to force the long-term anchored boats to relocate elsewhere. They also propose a managed mooring field to control part of their waters, but this is several years from completion. The City of Miami Beach, and Miami-Dade County, have made no progress in establishing an Anchoring Limitation Area in these waters as provided by current law. Each year Miami Beach attempts to change Florida law to ban anchoring in their waters instead of working within existing Florida law, and HB481 is this year’s attempt at that effort.

The National Marine Manufacturer’s Association reports boating has a $33.3B impact to Florida’s economy, it supports almost 110,000 jobs and supports more than 7,000 businesses. Clearly boating is important to Florida, Florida’s economy, and our lifestyle. We have posted videos from several of our members that talk about their lifestyle and the money they spend on boating related expenses in Florida. This bill attempts to push boaters out of several parts of the state and directly impacts Florida’s economy by encouraging those boaters to go elsewhere.

We urge you to veto HB481. It is unneeded, unwarranted, and creates a patchwork of anchoring regulations throughout Florida that are impossible for responsible boaters to adhere to. Thank you for your consideration.

A close up of a flag

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