

MSNBC's *The ReidOut*

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JOY REID: Florida Governor Ron DeSantis is proud as a peach of his handling of the coronavirus. After ginning up plaudits from Fox News and Politico, the embolden king of COVID is targeting private businesses that want their customers to provide proof of vaccination. The cruise industry, which is itching to set sail, has announced vaccination requirements for guests. DeSantis, ostensibly a free market Republican, has vowed to prohibit private businesses from doing just that, warning he would issue an executive order banning vaccine requirements. He's also vowing to sue the CDC if they don't allow cruises to restart by the summer. The guy is restricting safety requirements while pushing for the industry's top — right to pack hundreds of potentially infectious people in confined spaces. Brilliant. Currently, COVID-19 is surging in Florida. Just look at this Mayo Clinic map, which shows the state's hot spots. According to *The New York Times*, Miami-Dade County, home to spring destination Miami Beach, is currently a very high risk zone because of a severe outbreak. In just the last week, the number of variant cases has doubled. The overall number of cases is averaging 5,000 per day. Since the start of the pandemic, 34,000 Floridians have died. Joining me now is Nicki Fried, Florida commissioner for agriculture and consumer services. And, Commissioner Friend, what a strange governor you have that — you know, I'm no longer a Florida resident, so I can say that you have. He wants to sign an executive order. Does he have the power to stop private businesses from requiring people have a COVID test to, like, get on a cruise cause that seems beyond the power of a governor. Is that in his power?

NIKKI FRIED: Yeah. He — he continues to try to expand his power every single day and I just want to apologize to the rest of the country of what happens here in the state of Florida. I mean, he — yes, he went off on the rampage earlier this week that he is going to shut down allowing local businesses and state businesses to mandate people from protecting their employees and people that are coming into their, you know, shops or on the cruise line industry. You know, the Republicans continue to be hypocrites. You know, they keep talking about this free market and supporting the constitution and that's what the bread and butter is, but yet, every opportunity that Ron DeSantis has, he continues to siphon the — the economy and siphon these free market businesses who want to just do right by the people and the people that are coming to enjoy their products or, you know, their — their ship — cruise line industry

REID: You know, nothing terrifies me than the idea of being on a — on a cruise right now. I mean, COVID and the variants are still raging. They're raging particularly in Florida, more deaths, more people getting sick. What is the rationale that is coming out of the governor's office to demand that the CDC allow these ships to sail, especially if he's saying he wants them to sail without any kind of vaccine mandates? In other words, he's saying let them sail with sick people and infectious people on them.

FRIED: Well, let's be realistic. You know, the governor has not rational from day one. You know, he has taken this — this very dogmatic approach to the pandemic, open up the state of

Florida. Never closed it down at the front end. Never mandate a mask ordinance then he tells our local governments to take ownership of this issue and then says, never mind, we're not going to allow you to enforce your mandates and we're going to get rid of all the fines and fees that you put on the state of Florida and to the people. You know, so he's taken this approach that he just believes he's right and he's going to say these things because he is so focused on popularity and that he wants to take and have ownership of this Trump, you know, lane that — that we saw the last eight years. And he doesn't really understand that, in order for our economy to bounce back, we get in front of this pandemic. That means he should be showing leadership on getting the vaccine, encouraging our — our businesses and our local communities to be doing right to make sure that we're wearing masks, we're social distancing, that we're getting everybody vaccinated. Instead, he's focusing on this, you know, dogmatic approach of just open up the economy and we're going to be fine and this herd immunity and we're going to be behind this and I'm going to go on these national stages and — and Fox News and say, "you know, victory accomplished and look at everybody. I was right all the whole time." He's very egotistical and believes that he's right instead of talking about the 34,000 Floridians that we have lost. Where is his compassion for those individuals and those family members, business that have gone out of business because he refused to put the pandemic and the response to the pandemic as a priority. Instead, he was trying to kiss up to — to — Ronald — Donald Trump and even now that he's living in our state, trying to get the support of the past President and all of his supporters and not recognizing that he's got to focus on the citizens of our state and making sure that we get through this pandemic.

REID: Are you worried that, at a certain point businesses and travelers are going to start to see a as sort of an infection hub that doesn't care about, you know, decreases infection and start to stay away and it could end up hurting the economy there?

FRIED: Yeah, absolutely. You know, I have friends all across the country who say, listen, I want to be down to see my friends during the holidays and I can't now because you have a governor that opened up our state. I mean, look what is happening in Miami-Dade County, which is my hometown. You know, I'm someone who, you know, of course, I appreciate people wanting to, you know, be on spring break and haven't seen family and haven't seen their friends and have been locked up. But if you don't have a governor who is telling people, yes, come to our state. But you got to be safe. You go to make sure that you're social distancing. You got to be wearing your mask. And eventually, people are going to coming to the State of Florida because of this —

REID: Yeah.

FRIED: — even if we're all open. If not taking the precautions, people are not going to come here to the state.

REID: Let me ask you a question. Are you going to run against him for — when he runs for reelection?

FRIED: You know, Joy, as our only statewide elected Democrat, I am asked this question on an every day basis. And every single day, it's becoming clearer and clearer that Ron DeSantis needs to be a one term governor. Not only has he already left the State of Florida, he's already — his

eyes are already on 2024, focusing on the presidential bid and not on what's right for the state of Florida. We are getting very close to making a decision because the State of Florida and the people that live here deserve so much better than what they're getting from Ron DeSantis.

REID: Last question. You've accused — there's been some reporting that has accused and you also retweeted that the governor there fudged some numbers in terms of COVID. do you stand by that? There's been some dispute about whether that is true.

FRIED: Without a doubt. He has been, you know, fudging numbers from day one. Both on numbers that are come being out of our nursing homes, coming out of our prison system, asked the different morgues to change the death certificates and now the latest reports of this week shows that, in fact, we had almost 5,000 more deaths than were reported, so I do believe that he has lost the faith of the citizens of our state because they know he's not been honest with them from day one.

REID: Nikki Fried, thank you so much for being here. If you run, please come back and let us know. Appreciate it.