

JOHN P. GIAMASIS  
CLERK OF COURTS  
STARK COUNTY, OHIO  
2020 MAY 21 PM 12:51

IN THE COURT OF COMMON PLEAS  
STARK COUNTY, OHIO

**BASEMENT GROUP, LLC**  
6976 Whipple Avenue NW  
North Canton, Ohio 44720

CASE NO. **2020CV00816**

-and-

JUDGE: **Hartnett**

**BRUMAGIN, LLC**  
204 23rd Street  
Barberton, Ohio 44203

**COMPLAINT:**  
DECLARATORY JUDGMENT; BREACH  
OF CONTRACT; BAD FAITH;  
NEGLIGENCE; BREACH OF FIDUCIARY  
DUTY

-and-

**FESTIVUS, LLC**  
3250 West Market Street  
Suite 14  
Fairlawn, Ohio 44333

-and-

**WATERLOO 255, LLC**  
255 East Waterloo Road  
Akron, Ohio 44319

-and-

**FALLS BASEMENT, LLC**  
255 East Waterloo Road  
Akron, Ohio 44319

-and-

**HEMINGWAY HOLDINGS, LLC**  
151 Bayview Terrace  
Akron, Ohio 44319

-and-

**VALLEY PUB, LLC**  
151 Bayview Terrace  
Akron, Ohio 44319

**THE HILLS ENTERTAINMENT, LLC**  
1785 Fairlawn Knolls Drive  
Akron, Ohio 44313

-and-

**NIKKI BRADY, LLC**  
3420 Manchester Road  
Akron, Ohio 44319

Plaintiffs,

-vs.-

**ILLINOIS CASUALTY COMPANY**  
225 20th Street  
Rock Island, Illinois 61201

-and-

**UNITED STATES INSURANCE GROUP,  
LLC**  
c/o Michael Grossi  
4526 Stow Road  
Stow, Ohio 44224

-and-

**MICHAEL T. GROSSI**  
2261 East Gilwood Drive  
Stow, Ohio 44224

Defendants.

Now come Plaintiffs, The Basement Group, LLC (“Basement Group”), Brumagin, LLC (“Brumagin”), Festivus, LLC (“Festivus”), Waterloo 255, LLC (“Waterloo 255”), Falls Basement, LLC (“Falls Basement”), Hemingway Holdings, LLC (“Hemingway”), Valley Pub, LLC (“Valley Pub”), The Hills Entertainment, LLC (“The Hills”), and Nikki Brady, LLC (“Nikki Brady”) (collectively, “Plaintiffs”), and for their Complaint against Defendants Illinois Casualty Company (“ICC”), United States Insurance Group (“U.S. Insurance Group”), and Michael T. Grossi (“Grossi”) (ICC, U.S.

Insurance Group, and Grossi are collectively referred to herein as the “Defendants”), hereby state as follows:

### **INTRODUCTION**

1. Plaintiffs are engaged in the restaurant and bar business under the name The Basement with locations throughout Summit and Stark Counties, Ohio and have been operated by Timothy Adkins for more than the past decade.

2. Like many hospitality-based businesses, Plaintiffs have been deeply affected by the recent government shutdowns and have suffered substantial economic damages.

3. Since 9:00pm on March 15, 2020, Plaintiffs have been either completely shut down or have done substantially less business, unable to host guests in the restaurants or bars.

4. Also, like many hospitality-based businesses, for years Plaintiffs have faithfully paid tens of thousands of dollars in insurance payment premiums to Defendants, and believed that they were insured to the fullest extent possible to protect themselves, their employees, and their customers in the event of any losses.

5. In recent weeks, Plaintiffs have learned that Defendants claim that Plaintiffs do not have any insurance coverage for the staggering losses they have suffered and are continuing to suffer.

### **THE PARTIES**

6. Basement Group is an Ohio limited liability company doing business as The Basement at North Canton located at 6976 Whipple Avenue NW, North Canton, Stark County, Ohio 44720.

7. Brumagin is an Ohio limited liability company owning the premises operated by Nikki Brady, an Ohio limited liability company, doing business as The Basement at the Lakes located at 3420 Manchester Road, Akron, Summit County, Ohio 44319.

8. Festivus is an Ohio limited liability company owning the premises operated by The Hills, an Ohio limited liability company, doing business as The Basement at Sagamore Hills located at 480 West Aurora Rd., Northfield, Summit County, Ohio 44067

9. Waterloo 255 is an Ohio limited liability company doing business as The Basement at Waterloo located at 255 East Waterloo Road, Akron, Summit County, Ohio 44319.

10. Hemingway is an Ohio limited liability company owning the premises operated by Falls Basement, an Ohio limited liability company, doing business as The Basement at the Falls located at 740 Monroe Falls Avenue, Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio 44221.

11. Valley Pub is an Ohio limited liability company doing business as The Basement in the Valley located at 1282 Weathervane Lane, Akron, Ohio 44313.

12. ICC is, upon information and belief, an Illinois domestic insurance corporation with its principal office located at 225 20th Street, Rock Island, Illinois 61201. ICC is a property and casualty insurer that specializes in insuring businesses engaged in the restaurant and bar industry. Although ICC regularly sells insurance in the State of Ohio it has not registered as foreign corporation doing business in the state, nor has it registered a statutory agent in the State of Ohio.

13. U.S. Insurance Group is an Ohio limited liability company with its principal place of business at 4526 Stow Road, Stow, Summit County, Ohio 44224.

14. Grossi is a citizen of the State of Ohio, residing at 2261 East Gilwood Drive, Stow, Summit County, Ohio 44224, and is the President and CEO of U.S. Insurance Group.

#### **JURISDICTION AND VENUE**

15. This Honorable Court has jurisdiction over the parties and this dispute, including for declaratory relief, pursuant to Ohio Revised Code § 2307.382, *et seq.*, Ohio Revised Code § 2721.02, *et seq.* and Rule 57 of the Ohio Rules of Civil Procedure.

16. An actual controversy between Plaintiffs and ICC exists within the meaning of Ohio Revised Code § 2721.02, *et seq.* regarding whether ICC has a duty to provide Plaintiffs coverage and indemnity for, among other things, business income loss pursuant to the terms and conditions of the ICC policy of insurance, due to issues surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic, as more particularly described below.

17. Venue is proper in Stark County, Ohio under Ohio Rules of Civil Procedure 3(C)(3), 3(C)(6), and 3(C)(5) because Defendants conducted activity giving rise to Plaintiffs' claims for relief in Stark County, because all or part of Plaintiffs' claims for relief arose in Stark County, and because all or part of Plaintiffs' damages were suffered in Stark County.

#### **FACTUAL BACKGROUND**

##### ***The Policy: Plaintiffs Relied Upon Defendants to Provide them with the Broadest Possible Insurance Coverage to Protect Themselves, Their Employees, and Their Customers.***

18. At all relevant times, ICC insured Plaintiffs under a single commercial businessowners policy drafted by ICC, bearing policy number BP40877 ("Policy"). The certified Policy is in the possession of ICC, and while not attached hereto because it consists of hundreds of pages, it is incorporated herein by reference.

19. Since approximately December 2017, Plaintiffs have relied upon U.S. Insurance Group to provide business insurance advice and expertise and to procure business insurance on Plaintiffs' behalf.

20. For the past 3 years Grossi has been the agent responsible for Plaintiffs' account.

21. Every year, since 2017 U.S. Insurance Group through its agents, including Grossi, has provided Plaintiffs with an annual comprehensive written review of its existing insurance coverages and recommendations for additional or expanded insurance coverages.

22. Once U.S. Insurance Group and its agents prepare the annual written review and recommendations, Grossi meets face-to-face with Plaintiffs' representative and reviews, in detail, the entirety of the written review and recommendations including all of the coverages and exclusions and recommendations for additional or more comprehensive coverage.

23. Plaintiffs relied upon U.S. Insurance Group and Grossi, as their trusted insurance agents, to assess Plaintiffs' insurance needs, advise Plaintiffs of available coverages, accurately and fully explain to Plaintiffs available coverages and any potential exclusions, and to secure for Plaintiffs the broadest available coverage to protect Plaintiffs, their employees, and their customers.

24. U.S. Insurance Group and Grossi recommended the Policy to Plaintiffs and secured the Policy from ICC on Plaintiffs' behalf.

***Defendants Never Disclosed to Plaintiffs that the Policy Recommended by Defendants Purported to Exclude Loss Due to Virus or Bacteria***

25. ICC, U.S. Insurance Group and Grossi delivered the Policy to Plaintiffs.

26. However, neither U.S. Insurance Group nor Grossi ever advised Plaintiffs that the Policy of insurance that it recommended to Plaintiffs and secured on Plaintiffs' behalf contained an exclusion for "Loss Due to Virus or Bacteria".

27. Further, neither U.S. Insurance Group nor Grossi ever advised Plaintiffs that ICC may deny coverage paid for by Plaintiffs for claims for Business Interruption, Extra Expense, Civil Authority, and/or Spoilage coverages for losses due to virus or bacteria.

28. Further, neither U.S. Insurance Group nor Grossi, advised or disclosed to Plaintiffs that there were insurance policies available in the marketplace that did not contain an exclusion of loss due to virus or bacteria.

29. Under the Policy, Plaintiffs agreed to make premium payments to ICC in exchange for ICC's promise to indemnify Plaintiffs for losses including, but not limited to, business income loss at their commercial property locations (collectively "Property").

***Plaintiffs Have Paid for Business Interruption Coverage Recommended by Defendants Including Coverage for Losses Sustained from Physical Conditions Affecting Property and/or Losses Sustained from the Orders or Actions of Governmental Authorities***

30. The Policy is in effect from November 2, 2019 to November 2, 2020 and Plaintiffs faithfully paid premiums to ICC, specifically to provide additional coverage for loss of Business Income ("BI"), Extended Business Income ("EBI"), Extra Expense coverage ("EE"), coverage for loss due to actions of a Civil Authority, and Spoilage.

31. Relevant portions of the Policy provide that ICC will:

- a. "pay for the actual loss of Business Income you [Plaintiffs] sustain due to the necessary suspension of your "operations" during the "period of restoration". The suspension must be caused by direct physical loss of or damage to property at the described "premises". The loss or damage must be caused by or result from a Covered Cause of Loss."
- b. "... necessary Extra Expense you [Plaintiffs] incur during the "period of restoration" that you would not have incurred if there had been no direct physical loss or damage to property at the described "premises". The loss or damage must be caused by or result from a Covered Cause of Loss."
- c. "When a Covered Cause of Loss causes damage to property other than property at the described "premises", we will pay for the actual loss of Business Income you sustain and necessary Extra Expense caused by action of a civil authority that prohibits access to the described premises, provided that both of the following apply:
  - (1) Access to the area immediately surrounding the damaged property is prohibited by civil authority as a result of the damage, and the described "premises" are within that area but are not more than one mile from the damaged property; and
  - (2) The action of civil authority is taken in response to dangerous physical conditions resulting from the damage or continuation of the Covered Loss that caused the

damage, or the action is taken to enable a civil authority to have unimpeded access to the damaged property.

32. COVID-19's actual or suspected physical presence at or in the vicinity of Plaintiffs' Property prevents Plaintiffs from making full use of the Property, especially in cases where the businesses must close in part or in full. Under the terms and condition of the Policy, this kind of loss constitutes a physical damage to the Property in that the property has been rendered unusable. Moreover, the COVID-19 virus is a "physical" thing. For example, restaurants and event venues, such as those operated by Plaintiffs, forced to close due to COVID-19 in or near the restaurants and event venues have suffered a "physical loss" of their Property, with resulting business interruption loss.

33. Under the terms and conditions of the Policy, physical loss does not mean and/or require tangible physical damage.

34. The Policy is an "all-risk" policy, as it provides that a covered cause of loss under the policy means direct physical loss of or damage to the property unless the loss is specifically excluded or limited in the Policy. Here, no specific exclusion applies to reasonably justify the denial of Plaintiffs' claims.

***Plaintiffs have Suffered – and Continue to Suffer – Substantial Losses from the Physical Presence or Contamination of COVID19 and/or the Business Suspension Orders of the Government***

35. While the Policy was in force, Plaintiffs sustained, and continue to sustain, a loss(es) due to the issues created by the physical spread and/or contamination of COVID-19 at, in, on, and/or around Plaintiffs' premises described in the Policy which includes Plaintiffs' facilities in Stark and Summit Counties.

36. While the Policy was in force, Plaintiffs sustained, and continue to sustain, a loss(es) due to the issues surrounding the spread of COVID-19 in the community (the "Pandemic").



37. While the Policy was in force, Plaintiffs sustained, and continue to sustain, a loss(es) due to the civil authority orders issued by the Governor of Ohio and the Ohio Department of Health addressing COVID-19 and the Pandemic.

38. Based upon information and belief, ICC has accepted the policy premiums from Plaintiffs with no intention of providing any coverage under the Policy's Business Income, Extra-Expense, Civil Authority, or Spoilage Coverage Sections due to a loss and/or shutdown from a pandemic, i.e. the issues surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic.

39. While the Policy was in force, Plaintiffs sustained, and continue to sustain, a loss(es) due to the issues created by COVID-19 at, in, on, and/or around Plaintiffs' premises described in the Policy which includes Plaintiffs' facilities in Stark and Summit Counties.

40. While the Policy was in force, Plaintiffs sustained, and continue to sustain, a loss(es) due to the issues created by the spread of COVID-19 in the community.

41. While the Policy was in force, Plaintiffs sustained, and continue to sustain, a loss(es) due to the civil authority orders issued by the Governor of Ohio and the Ohio Department of Health addressing the COVID-19 Pandemic.

***The COVID-19 Pandemic: The Policy Does Not Contain any Pandemic Exclusion***

42. In late 2019 and early 2020, an outbreak of respiratory illness caused by a novel COVID-19 started to infect humans across the globe.

43. On January 31, 2020, under §319 of the Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C.247d), The Secretary of Health and Human Services ("HHS") declared a public health emergency in response to COVID-19.

44. On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization ("WHO") declared the COVID-19 outbreak a pandemic (i.e. a global outbreak of disease).

45. On March 13, 2020 the President of the United States of America, Donald J. Trump, issued the Proclamation on Declaring a National Emergency Concerning the Novel Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Outbreak ("Proclamation"), proclaiming the COVID-19 outbreak constituted a national emergency in the United States, beginning March 1, 2020.

46. Various states, including the State of Ohio have issued and implemented mandatory Stay-At-Home Orders, requiring businesses, such as Plaintiffs, to shut down or severely curtail their operations, thus suffering a loss of use of their Property, and resulting in substantial loss of business income.

47. On March 29, 2020 President Donald J. Trump announced the extension of his Administration's social distancing guidelines until April 30, 2020.

48. COVID-19 is a physical substance.

49. COVID-19 can be present outside the human body in viral fluid particles.

50. COVID-19 can and does live on and/or remains capable of being transmitted and active on inert physical surfaces.

51. COVID-19 can and does live on and/or remains capable of being transmitted and active on floors, walls, furniture, desks, tables, chairs, countertops, computer keyboards, touch screens, cardboard packages, food items, silverware, plates, serving trays, glasses, straws, menus, pots, pans, kitchen utensils, faucets, refrigerators, freezers, and other items of property for a period of time.

52. COVID-19 can be transmitted by way of human contact with surfaces and items of physical property on which COVID-19 particles are physically present.

53. COVID-19 has been transmitted by way of human contact with surfaces and items of physical property located at premises in Stark and Summit Counties.

54. COVID-19 can be transmitted by human to human contact and interaction at premises in Summit and Stark Counties, including places like restaurants.

55. COVID-19 has been transmitted by human to human contact and interaction at premises in Summit and Stark Counties.

56. COVID-19 can be transmitted through airborne viral particles emitted into the air at premises.

57. COVID-19 has been transmitted by way of human contact with airborne COVID-19 particles emitted into the air at premises in Stark and Summit Counties.

58. The presence of any COVID-19 particles renders items of physical property unsafe.

59. The presence of any COVID-19 particles on physical property impairs its value, usefulness and/or normal function.

60. The presence of any COVID-19 particles causes direct physical harm to property.

61. The presence of any COVID-19 particles causes direct physical loss to property.

62. The presence of any COVID-19 particles causes direct physical damage to property.

63. The presence of any COVID-19 particles at a premises renders the premises unsafe, thereby impairing the premises' value, usefulness and/or normal function.

64. The presence of people infected with or carrying COVID-19 particles renders physical property in their vicinity unsafe and unusable, resulting in direct physical loss to that property.

65. The presence of people infected with or carrying COVID-19 particles at premises renders the premises, including property located at that premises, unsafe, resulting in direct physical loss to the premises and property.

***Various Civil Authorities Have Issued Orders Which Required  
the Suspension of Plaintiffs' Business Operations***

66. In response to COVID-19 and the Pandemic, the Governor of Ohio has issued multiple

executive orders pursuant to the authority vested in him by the Ohio Constitution and the laws of Ohio.

67. In response to COVID-19 and the Pandemic, the Ohio Department of Health, pursuant to its authority under Ohio law, has issued multiple orders, including a Stay At Home Order.

68. The term "civil authority" is not defined in the Policy.

69. The State of Ohio is a civil authority as contemplated by the Policy.

70. The Ohio Department of Health is a civil authority as contemplated by the Policy.

71. The Stark County Health Department and the Summit County Health Department are civil authorities as contemplated by the Policy.

72. The Governor of the State of Ohio is a civil authority as contemplated by the Policy.

73. On March 9, 2020, Ohio Governor Mike DeWine issued Executive Order 2020- 01D that declared a state of emergency in response to the physical presence of COVID-19 and the Pandemic.

74. On March 15, 2020, Ohio restricted food and beverage sales to carry-out and delivery only, with no onsite consumption permitted. Further, Ohio prohibited social gatherings of more than ten people. The stated goal of these orders was to slow the spread of COVID-19 by minimizing in-person interaction "in an environment with a multitude of hard surfaces." The order reiterated that "It may be possible that individuals can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose or eyes." Also that:

Previously studied human coronaviruses (including SARS, which is very closely related to COVID-19) can survive on paper, wood, glass, plastic up to 4-5 days. *Persistence of coronaviruses on inanimate surfaces and their inactivation with biocidal agents*, The Journal of Hospital Infection, March 2020, Volume 104, Issue 3, Pages 246-251.

75. On March 22, 2020, the Ohio Department of Health issued a Stay At Home Order, effective March 23, 2020, ordering Ohio residents to stay at home. By way of this order the State of Ohio ordered all non-essential businesses in Ohio to cease all activities.

76. Plaintiffs' businesses do not qualify as Essential Businesses and Plaintiffs were required to cease and/or significantly reduce operations at all its locations.

77. The civil authority orders, including, but not limited to the Stay At Home Order, prohibit access to Plaintiffs' premises described in the Policy.

78. The State of Ohio, through the Governor and the Department of Health, have issued, and continue to issue, authoritative orders governing Ohioans and Ohio businesses, including Plaintiffs, in response to COVID-19 and the Pandemic, the effect of which have required and continue to require Plaintiffs to cease and/or significantly reduce operations at, and that have prohibited and continue to prohibit access to, the premises described in the Policy.

***The Presence of COVID-19 Is Uniformly Recognized to Cause Contamination, Loss and Damage to Property***

79. State and local governmental authorities, and public health officials around the Country, acknowledge that the issues surrounding COVID-19 and the Pandemic cause direct physical loss and damage to property. For example:

- a. The state of Colorado issued a Public Health Order indicating that "COVID-19... physically ***contributes to property loss, contamination, and damage ...***" (Emphasis added);
- b. The City of New York issued an Emergency Executive Order in response to COVID-19 and the Pandemic, in part "because the virus ***physically is causing property loss and damage.***" (Emphasis added);
- c. Broward County, Florida issued an Emergency Order acknowledging that COVID-19 ***"is physically causing property damage."*** (Emphasis added);
- d. The State of Washington issued a stay at home Proclamation stating the "COVID-19 pandemic and its progression ... remains a public disaster affecting life, health, ***[and]property .. .***" (Emphasis added);
- e. The State of Indiana issued an Executive Order recognizing that COVID-19 has the "propensity to ***physically*** impact surfaces and personal ***property.***" (Emphasis added);

- f. The City of New Orleans issued an order stating "there is reason to believe that COVID-19 may spread amongst the population by various means of exposure, including the propensity to attach to surfaces for prolonged period of time, thereby spreading from surface to person and **causing property loss and damage** in certain circumstances." (Emphasis added);
- g. The State of Illinois issued an Executive Order describing COVID-19's "propensity to **physically** impact surfaces and personal **property.**" (Emphasis added);
- h. The State of New Mexico issued a Public Health Order acknowledging the "threat" COVID-19 "poses" to "**property.**" (Emphasis added);
- i. North Carolina issued a statewide Executive Order in response to the Pandemic not only "to assure adequate protection for lives," but also to "assure adequate protection of... **property.**" (Emphasis added); and
- j. The City of Los Angeles issued an Order in response to COVID-19 "because, among other reasons, the COVID-19 virus can spread easily from person to person and it is **physically causing property loss or damage** due to its tendency to attach to surfaces for prolonged periods of time." (Emphasis added).

80. The issues surrounding COVID-19 and the Pandemic are physically impacting public and private property in Ohio and throughout the country.

81. The issues surrounding COVID-19 and the Pandemic have caused and continue to cause direct physical loss and damage to property.

82. People in Stark and Summit Counties have been diagnosed with COVID-19.

83. As of May 20, 2020, Stark County had reported 620 cases of COVID-19 and 79 resulting deaths.

84. As of May 20, 2020, Summit County had reported 1,077 cases of COVID-19 and 131 resulting deaths.

85. People in Stark and Summit Counties have, and have had, COVID-19 disease but have not been diagnosed.

86. People in Stark and Summit Counties have COVID-19 particles on or about their person and personal property.

87. Properties and premises throughout Stark and Summit Counties contain the presence of COVID-19 particles on surfaces and items of property.

88. Based on the prevalence of the virus in Stark and Summit Counties, it is probable that Plaintiffs sustained direct physical loss of or damage due to the presence of coronavirus, and has unquestionably sustained direct physical loss as the result of the Pandemic and/or civil authority orders issued by the Governor of Ohio.

***The Rules of Contract Interpretation Provide Coverage for Plaintiffs but Defendants Have Wrongfully Denied Coverage Even Though the Policy Contains No Exclusions for Pandemic Losses***

89. Plaintiffs submitted a timely insurance claim to ICC.

90. Any effort by ICC to deny the reality that the Pandemic causes physical loss of or damage to property would constitute a false and potentially fraudulent misrepresentation that could endanger policyholders, such as Plaintiffs, and the public.

91. However, on March 26, 2020, ICC wrongfully denied Plaintiffs' claims for Business Interruption, Extra Expense, Civil Authority, and Spoilage coverage.

92. Prior to the COVID-19 Pandemic, companies throughout the insurance industry specifically used exclusionary language that specifically and expressly excluded loss or damage as a result of a pandemic and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome ("SARS"). Defendants knew or should have known of the existence and availability of specific exclusionary riders for pandemics if the intention was to exclude losses resulting from pandemics.

93. For example, In *Meyer Natural Foods, LLC v. Liberty Mutual Fire Insurance Company*, 218 F.Supp.3d 1034, 196 Fed.R.Serv.3d 206, Liberty Mutual Fire Insurance Company denied coverage based on the following exclusion:

"We will not pay for loss or damage caused by or resulting from any of the following, regardless of any other cause or event, including a peril insured against, that contribute to the loss at the same time or in any other sequence:

10. The actual or suspected presence or threat of any virus, organism or like substance that is capable of inducing disease, illness, physical distress or death, whether infectious or otherwise, including but not limited to any epidemic, *pandemic*, influenza, plague, *SARS*, or Avian Flu. (emphasis added.)

94. COVID-19 is a SARS, and the WHO has officially named COVID-19 as SARS CoV-2.

95. In this case, under the coverage forms at issue, ICC based its denial on its claim that there is no direct physical loss of or damage to the premises and on exclusions that are not applicable to a pandemic.

96. Had ICC intended to exclude claims for the COVID-19 Pandemic made under the subject Policy, it would have, and could have, included the express exclusionary language that had been utilized in the insurance industry in the past to deny such claims, which specifically included the term "pandemic" and "SARS," but ICC failed to include such an exclusion in Plaintiffs' Policy.

97. ICC knowingly, purposely, and intentionally used inapplicable exclusions to deny claims by Plaintiffs for Business Interruption, Extra Expense, Civil Authority, and Spoilage related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

98. ICC had at its disposal contractual language that specifically excluded pandemics and SARS but did not include those policy exclusions in the subject Policy, yet wrongfully denied claims for those very reasons.

99. ICC has actual knowledge of the different meanings between pandemic, SARS, virus, bacteria, and contamination, by way of its use of those terms and the use of those terms by other companies in the insurance industry in previous cases and policies utilizing those different terms, and wrongfully and intentionally used the terms "virus" and "bacteria," among others, to exclude Plaintiffs'



claims when, in fact, Plaintiffs' claims are related to a pandemic – which is not expressly excluded in the Policy.

100. Alternatively, the business income losses suffered by Plaintiffs were caused by the orders issued by the Governor of Ohio requiring Plaintiffs to cease and/or severely curtail its business operations and not COVID-19.

101. Alternatively, the terms and conditions of coverage and exclusionary language relied upon by ICC to deny Plaintiffs coverage under the Policy related to the Pandemic are ambiguous and, therefore, must be strictly construed against ICC and in favor of Plaintiffs.

### **COUNT ONE**

#### ***DECLARATORY JUDGMENT***

102. Plaintiffs restate each preceding paragraph as if fully rewritten herein.

103. There is a genuine dispute and actual controversy, over which this Honorable Court has jurisdiction, between Plaintiffs and ICC concerning their respective rights, duties and obligations for which Plaintiffs requests a declaration of rights and obligations under the Policy. Speedy relief is necessary in order to preserve the rights of the parties which may otherwise be impaired or lost. The declaratory judgment sought will settle the controversy between the parties.

104. Since there is a dispute about whether or not Plaintiffs have coverage under ICC's Policy for the loss sustained and to be incurred in the future, Plaintiffs are entitled to declaratory relief from this Honorable Court pursuant to Ohio Civil Rule 57 and R.C. §2721.01 to 2721.15.

105. Plaintiffs are entitled to a declaration including, but not limited to, that:

- a. Plaintiffs sustained direct physical loss or damage as a result of the Pandemic;
- b. Physical loss under the Policy does not require tangible physical damage;
- c. COVID-19 is a covered cause of loss under the Policy;

- d. The losses incurred by Plaintiffs as a result of the executive orders issued by the Governor of Ohio are covered losses under the Policy;
- e. The prohibition (and/or significant limitation) of access to Plaintiffs' properties as Ordered by the Civil Authority Orders, constitutes a prohibition to the insureds' Properties;
- f. The Civil Authority Orders trigger coverage because the Policy does not include an exclusion for a pandemic;
- g. The Policy provides coverage to Plaintiffs for any current and future civil authority closures of commercial buildings due to physical loss of or damage to property from COVID-19 under the Civil Authority coverage parameters and the Policy provides business income coverage in the event COVID-19 has caused a loss or damage at the insureds' Properties or immediate area of the insureds' Properties;
- h. The Civil Authority Orders constitute a prohibition of access to the insureds' Properties by a Civil Authority as defined in the Policy;
- i. ICC has not and cannot prove the application of any exclusion or limitation;
- j. Plaintiffs are entitled to coverage for their Business Income loss and Extra Expense resulting from coronavirus;
- k. Plaintiffs are entitled to coverage for loss due to the actions of Ohio's civil authorities;
- l. Plaintiffs have coverage for any substantially similar civil authority order in the future that limits or restricts the public's access to Plaintiffs' business establishments; and
- m. Any other issue that may arise during the course of litigation that is a proper issue on which to grant declaratory relief.

## COUNT TWO

### ***BREACH OF CONTRACT***

- 106. Plaintiffs restate each preceding paragraph as if fully rewritten herein.
- 107. Plaintiffs and ICC entered into a valid and enforceable insurance contract.
- 108. Plaintiffs gave valuable consideration in the form of premium payments in exchange for the promise of insurance coverage in the event of, among other things, loss of business income.

109. ICC had an affirmative duty to comply with terms and conditions of the Policy and find coverage wherever possible under the Policy and indemnify Plaintiffs for its losses sustained and recoverable under the terms and conditions of the Policy.

110. Plaintiffs made a claim for loss of Business Income, Extra- Expense, Civil Authority, and Spoilage arising from the Pandemic, interruption by civil authority and prohibited ingress and loss of use and/or utilization of Plaintiffs' businesses.

111. ICC breached the insurance contract by denying coverage for Plaintiffs' loss, which was due to a covered and foreseeable peril not subject to any exclusion.

112. Plaintiffs complied with all of its obligations under the insurance contract.

113. Plaintiffs have been injured and suffered financial harm as a result of ICC's breach of the insurance contract.

114. In addition, in breaching the contract, ICC has violated its implied duty to act in good faith and fair dealing with Plaintiffs.

115. As a direct and proximate result of ICC's breach of contract, Plaintiffs have incurred substantial and ongoing monetary damages in excess of \$25,000.00.

### **COUNT THREE**

#### ***BREACH OF COVENANT OF GOOD FAITH AND FAIR DEALING (BAD FAITH)***

116. Plaintiffs restate each preceding paragraph as if fully rewritten herein.

117. Ohio law recognizes the independent tort of bad faith in the context of the insured/insurer relationship.

118. ICC's conduct has breached the implied covenant of good faith and fair dealing implicit to the policy of insurance.

119. Ohio law provides that an insurer's lack of good faith is equivalent to bad faith.

120. Plaintiffs are insureds of ICC in the State of Ohio.

121. ICC failed and refused to make an adequate investigation or any investigation regarding Plaintiffs' claims which, among other things, has caused a severe delay in full indemnification of Plaintiffs, and providing all benefits that Plaintiffs are entitled to under the Policy, which has severely prejudiced and damaged Plaintiffs, and has further resulted in ICC withholding all recoverable benefits due under the Policy.

122. ICC refused and continues to refuse to give any reasonable interpretation to the provisions in the Policy or any reasonable application of such provisions to Plaintiffs' claims and has acted to protect its own financial interests therein at the expense of and detriment to Plaintiffs' rights.

123. ICC failed to provide Plaintiffs any reasonable or justifiable basis for denying Plaintiffs' claims.

124. ICC misrepresented the Policy terms and conditions to Plaintiffs including, and without limitation, attempting to use an inapplicable exclusion, i.e. the virus/bacteria exclusion in a knowing and malicious attempt to avoid paying Plaintiffs all benefits they are entitled to under the Policy.

125. ICC, knowing that Plaintiffs were inexperienced in insurance matters and unable to act to protect their interests, that such benefits were justly due, and that such benefits were necessary to pay Plaintiffs' necessities of their use of the Premises, nevertheless have deprived Plaintiffs of such benefits.

126. ICC's refusal to properly investigate, adjust, handle, process, and/or pay benefits due Plaintiffs compelled Plaintiffs to, among other things, engage counsel and to initiate litigation to recover such benefits.

127. Upon information and belief, Plaintiffs allege that ICC intends to and will continue to delay, deny, and withhold, in bad faith, benefits due Plaintiffs unless and until compelled to pay such benefits by final judgment of this Honorable Court.

128. As a direct and proximate result of ICC's conduct, Plaintiffs have sustained substantial compensable losses, including benefits withheld, and economic losses, such as attorney's fees, out of pocket expenses, loss of business income, personal property loss, out-of-pocket costs and expenses, diminution in value of the insurance policy, all to Plaintiffs' detriment and damage in an amount to be proven at trial in excess of \$25,000.00.

129. Further, at all material times and in doing things alleged herein, ICC acted intentionally and with actual malice so as to justify the award of punitive damages against ICC.

#### **COUNT FOUR**

##### ***Negligence***

130. Plaintiffs restate each preceding paragraph as if fully rewritten herein.

131. At all times relevant herein, U.S. Insurance Group was and is an insurance agency engaged in the business of providing insurance advice and expertise to and procuring insurance on behalf of its clients, including Plaintiffs.

132. From December 2017 through the present, U.S. Insurance Group has acted as an insurance agent to Plaintiffs. At all times relevant herein, Grossi was and is an insurance agent employed by U.S. Insurance Group, and, for the past more than two years, has, within the scope and course of his employment with U.S. Insurance Group, acted as an insurance agent to Plaintiffs.

133. At all times relevant herein, U.S. Insurance Group and Grossi had and have a duty to Plaintiffs to exercise good faith and reasonable diligence in providing insurance advice and expertise to Plaintiffs and securing insurance on Plaintiffs' behalf.

134. Further, U.S. Insurance Group and Grossi knew that Plaintiffs were relying upon U.S. Insurance Group and Grossi's expertise and advice as to Plaintiffs' insurance needs and, therefore, U.S. Insurance Group and Grossi had a duty to exercise reasonable care in advising Plaintiffs as to business

interruption, extra expense, civil authority, and premier business income insurance coverages and the exclusions thereto.

135. Both U.S. Insurance Group and Grossi breached the duties of care that they had to Plaintiffs.

136. U.S. Insurance Group and Grossi's breaches of the duty of care include, but are not limited to, failing to advise Plaintiffs that the Policy of insurance that it recommended to Plaintiffs and secured on Plaintiffs' behalf contained an exclusion titled "Loss Due to Virus or Bacteria;" failing to advise Plaintiffs that ICC may deny coverage of claims for Business Interruption, Extra Expense, Civil Authority, and/or Spoilage coverages for losses due to virus or bacteria; failing to advise Plaintiffs that there were insurance policies available in the marketplace that did not contain an exclusion of loss due to virus or bacteria; and failing to procure insurance on Plaintiffs' behalf that did not contain a virus or bacteria exclusion.

137. U.S. Insurance Group and Grossi's breach of their duties to Plaintiffs have caused damage to Plaintiffs in that Plaintiffs have suffered significant business interruption losses and expenses for which no insurance coverage has been provided.

138. As a direct and proximate result of the negligent acts of U.S. Insurance Group and Grossi, Plaintiffs have suffered damages in an amount to be proven at trial in excess of \$25,000.

## **COUNT FIVE**

### ***Breach of Fiduciary Duty***

139. Plaintiffs restate each preceding paragraph as if fully rewritten herein.

140. Since approximately December 2017, Plaintiffs have relied upon and trusted U.S. Insurance Group to provide business insurance advice and expertise and to procure business insurance on Plaintiffs' behalf.

141. During this time, U.S. Insurance Group, and during the past more than two years Grossi, have become intimately familiar with Plaintiffs' business operations.

142. Every year, since December 2017, U.S. Insurance Group through its agents, including Grossi, have provided Plaintiffs with an annual comprehensive written review of its existing insurance coverages and recommendations for additional or expanded insurance coverages.

143. Once U.S. Insurance Group and its agents prepare the annual written review and recommendations, the agent meets face-to-face with Plaintiffs' representatives and reviews, in detail, the entirety of the written review and recommendations including all of the coverages and exclusions and recommendations for additional or more comprehensive coverage.

144. Plaintiffs relied upon U.S. Insurance Group and Grossi, as its insurance agents, to assess Plaintiffs' insurance needs, advise Plaintiffs of available coverages, accurately and fully explain to Plaintiffs available coverages and any potential exclusions, and to secure for Plaintiffs the broadest available coverage.

145. U.S. Insurance Group, Grossi, and Plaintiffs understood that Plaintiffs had placed a special trust and confidence in U.S. Insurance Group and Grossi such that a fiduciary relationship had been established between U.S. Insurance Group and Grossi, on the one hand, and Plaintiffs on the other.

146. Accordingly, U.S. Insurance Group and Grossi had a fiduciary duty to Plaintiffs in advising Plaintiffs as to business interruption, extra expense, civil authority, and spoilage and the exclusions thereto and to procure insurance for Plaintiffs that would provide the broadest possible coverage.

147. U.S. Insurance Group and Grossi breached their fiduciary duty to Plaintiffs by, among other things, failing to advise Plaintiffs that the Policy of insurance that it recommended to Plaintiffs and secured on Plaintiffs' behalf contained an exclusion titled "Loss Due to Virus or Bacteria;" failing to

advise Plaintiffs that ICC may deny coverage of claims for Business Interruption, Extra Expense, Civil Authority, and/or Spoilage coverages for losses due to virus or bacteria; failing to advise Plaintiffs that there were insurance policies available in the marketplace that did not contain an exclusion of loss due to virus or bacteria; and failing to procure insurance on Plaintiffs' behalf that did not contain a virus or bacteria exclusion.

148. U.S. Insurance Group and Grossi's breach of their fiduciary duty to Plaintiffs have caused damage to Plaintiffs in that Plaintiffs have suffered significant business interruption losses and expenses for which no insurance coverage has been provided.

149. As a direct and proximate result of U.S. Insurance Group's and Grossi's breach of their fiduciary duties, Plaintiffs have suffered damages in an amount to be proven at trial in excess of \$25,000.

**WHEREFORE**, Plaintiffs, The Basement Group, LLC, Brumagin, LLC, Festivus, LLC, Waterloo 255, LLC, Falls Basement, LLC, Hemingway Holdings, LLC, Valley Pub, LLC, The Hills Entertainment, LLC, and Nikki Brady, LLC demand judgment as follows:

- A. For Count One, a declaratory judgment as set forth in Paragraph 105 of this Complaint;
- B. For Count Two, judgment against ICC for compensatory damages in excess of \$25,000.00;
- C. For Count Three, judgment against ICC for compensatory damages in excess of \$25,000.00, punitive damages in an amount to be determined at trial, and attorney fees;
- D. For Count Four, judgment against U.S. Insurance Group and Grossi, jointly and severally, for compensatory damages in excess of \$25,000.00;
- E. For Count Five, judgment against U.S. Insurance Group and Grossi, jointly and severally, for compensatory damages in excess of \$25,000.00;
- F. For judgment against all Defendants for attorneys' fees in an amount to be determined by the Court, prejudgment and post judgment interest in accordance with the statutory rate; costs of



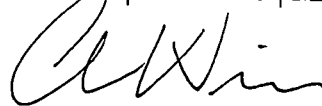
the within action; and

G. Any further relief that this Court deems just and equitable.

DATED: May 21, 2020

Respectfully submitted,

**TZANGAS | PLAKAS | MANNOS | LTD**



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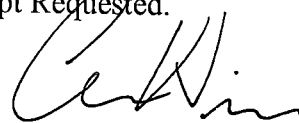
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Gary A. Corroto (0055270)  
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*Counsel for Plaintiff*

**INSTRUCTIONS FOR SERVICE**

**To the Clerk:**

Please issue summons, a copy of the Complaint upon Defendants at the addresses contained in the caption of this Complaint by Certified Mail, Return Receipt Requested.



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Collin S. Wise  
*Counsel for Plaintiff*