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03 March 2017

The Honorable Barbara Watson  
Florida House of Representatives  
402 South Monroe Street, Room 1003, The Capitol  
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1300

Re: HB 705 Exemption/Elder Abuse Fatality Review Teams

Dear Representative Watson:

We are writing to express some concerns regarding HB 705, creating public record and open meetings exemptions for elder abuse fatality review teams.

While we are not opposed to the proposed exemptions, Representative Watson, we are concerned by the lack of oversight. Specifically, lines 34 – 37 provide an exemption for portions of team meetings at which exempt meetings are discussed. There is no requirement that those closed portions of meetings be recorded. Without some record of the discussions that occurred behind closed doors, we can't be assured that the teams are limiting themselves to the conversations they're allowed to have.

We suggest, then, that HB 705 be amended to require that the closed portions of team meetings be recorded and that those recordings be made public at some specific point in time. All exempt information in those recordings would be protected under the public record exemption.

Thank you for your attention to our concerns, Representative Watson. If you have any questions or if we can be of any assistance in drafting the suggested amendment, please don't hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,

Barbara A. Petersen, President

Cc: The Honorable Richard Corcoran, Speaker  
Jon Kaney, General Counsel, First Amendment Foundation  
Sam Morley, General Counsel, Florida Press Association