



16 February 2018

The Honorable Danny Burgess
Florida House of Representatives
402 South Monroe Street, Room 303, The Capitol
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1300

Re: HB 7079 Exemption/Disaster Response

Dear Representative Burgess:

We are writing to express our concerns regarding HB 7079, which creates a public record exemption for certain information of people using public shelters during emergencies.

As currently drafted, HB 7079 would exempt the name, address, and telephone number of a person using a public shelter. While we are not opposed to the exemptions for the address and telephone number, Representative Burgess, we are concerned with the exemption for the names. During a natural disaster, or other emergency situation, people want to know that their loved ones are safe. In those emergency situations, calling a loved one to see if they are safe becomes difficult due to power outages and lack of cell phone coverage. Therefore, access to the names of people who are using public shelters may be the only way for someone to make sure that their loved ones are safe. For this reason, we think it imprudent to exempt from public records the names of people using public shelters during emergencies.

Therefore, we respectfully request that HB 7079 be amended so as to continue to allow access to the names of people using public shelters during emergencies.

Thank you for your attention to our concerns, Representative Burgess. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,

Barbara A. Petersen, President

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

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