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March 6, 2019

The Honorable Kristin Jacobs  
Florida House of Representatives  
402 South Monroe Street, Room 200 HOB  
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1300

Re: HB 1201 Exemption/Autopsy Reports

Dear Representative Jacobs:

We are writing to express our opposition to HB 1201, creating a public record exemption for autopsy reports and related records that personally identify the deceased held by a medical examiner. Presumably, virtually all autopsy reports personally identify the deceased, and even those autopsy reports of a Jane or John Doe would identify the deceased in some manner or another. We believe HB 1201 is contrary to the public interest and respectfully request that it be withdrawn from consideration.

Autopsy photographs, videos, and audio recordings are currently exempt from public disclosure, so an autopsy report is our only means of determining how a person actually died. As an example, a cause of death can be listed as heart failure; the autopsy report provides details on how the heart failed. Was it a heart attack, or was the deceased's chest crushed during an altercation with prison guards? Without access to autopsy photographs or videos, the medical examiner's autopsy report is the only means by which the public can hold government officials and employees accountable for their actions.

We appreciate your attention to our concerns, Rep. Jacobs. If you or your staff have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,

Barbara A. Petersen, President

Cc: The Honorable Jose Oliva, Speaker, Florida House of Representatives