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March 12, 2019

The Honorable Toby Overdorf
Florida House of Representatives
402 South Monroe Street, Room 1401 CAP
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1300

Re: HB 1249 Exemption/Foster Parents

Dear Representative Overdorf:

We are writing to express our opposition to HB 1249, creating a public record exemption for the names of foster parents. The bill is scheduled for consideration by the House Children, Families & Seniors Subcommittee on Wednesday, March 13.

Current law provides basic protections to foster parents and foster parent applicants – where they live and work, where their children go to school, their photographs, even the floor plans of their homes. HB 1249 expands the exemption to exempt the names of foster parents and foster parent applicants.

Foster parents are in a unique position – they are licensed (and paid) by the state to care for the most vulnerable members of our society, our children. We don't have to look hard to find story after story of foster parents who abused children in their care or instances in which the Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF) was lax in protecting those children and overseeing those entrusted with their care. Without the names of foster parents and foster parent applicants, the public's ability to oversee DCF and hold it accountable for its actions, or in some cases inactions, is impermissibly obstructed.

In short, Representative Overdorf, we believe HB 1249 is contrary to the public interest and we respectfully request it be withdrawn from consideration.

If you or your staff have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,

Barbara A. Petersen, President

Cc: The Honorable Mel Ponder, Chair, House Children, Families & Seniors Subcommittee