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March 12, 2019

The Honorable Bill Montford
The Florida Senate
404 South Monroe Street, Room 410 SOB
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1100

Re: SB 1622 Exemption/Foster Parents

Dear Senator Montford:

We are writing to express our opposition to SB 1622, creating a public record exemption for the names of foster parents.

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. SB 1622 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In short, Senator Montford, we believe SB 1622 is contrary to the public interest and we respectfully request it be withdrawn from consideration.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 Lauren Book, Chair, Senate Children, Families and Elder Affairs Committee