



March 6, 2019

The Honorable Bobby Powell  
The Florida Senate  
404 South Monroe Street, Room 214 SOB  
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1100

Re: SB 836 Exemption/Public Shelters and Damage Assessments

Dear Senator Powell:

We are writing to express our concerns regarding SB 836, which creates a public record exemption for certain information of people using public shelters during emergencies and contained in damage assessments held by an agency.

We have two concerns. First, as currently drafted, SB 836 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, Senator Powell, we are concerned with the exemption for the names. During a natural disaster, or other emergency situation, people want to know their loved ones are safe. In those emergency situations, calling to check on family and friends 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.

In addition, it's not clear from the constitutionally-required statement of public necessity why the names of those seeking or receiving a damage assessment of their property is needed or how anonymity protects owners or tenants. The purported harm is speculative at best and does not meet the constitutional standard under Art. I, s. 24(c), Fla. Con.

Therefore, we respectfully suggest that 836 be amended to allow access to the names of people using public shelters during emergencies or seeking and receiving a damage assessment.

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

Sincerely,

Barbara A. Petersen, President

Cc: The Honorable Tom Lee, Chair, Senate Infrastructure and Security Committee

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