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January 6, 2020

The Honorable Holly Merrill Raschein  
Florida House of Representatives  
402 S. Monroe Street, Room 418 Cap  
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1300

Re: HB 1035 Exemption/Disaster Recovery Assistance

Dear Representative Raschein:

I am writing on behalf of the First Amendment Foundation in response to HB 1035, which would create a limited public record exemption for records and information related to property photographs, financial documents, or financial information provided to certain government agencies for disaster recovery assistance. While we do not object to the proposed exemptions, we do have a concern that can be easily addressed by a minor amendment.

We suggest that HB 1035 be amended to clarify that the personal identifying information of those seeking assistance is not included within the scope of the exemption. Access to personal identifying information is critical to the public's ability to oversee the disaster recovery assistance program and to make sure that only those qualified for assistance are actually receiving it.

If you have any questions, or if we can be of assistance in drafting the suggested amendment, please do not hesitate to contact us. Thank you for your attention to our concerns.

Sincerely,

Pamela C. Marsh, President

Cc: The Honorable Jose Oliva, Speaker, Florida House of Representatives  
Mr. Jim Baltzelle, Associated Press, Chair, First Amendment Foundation  
Mr. Samuel Morley, General Counsel, Florida Press Association  
Ms. Lisa Nellessen Savage, Chair, Florida Society of News Editors