



March 2, 2021

House Tourism, Infrastructure & Energy Subcommittee
303 House Office Building
402 S. Monroe Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1300

Re: HB 379 Pub. Rec./Economic Development Agencies

I write to express the First Amendment Foundation's objection to House Bill 379, which will exempt certain information held by an economic development agency pursuant to its administration of a state or federally funded small business loan program. This exemption will prevent public oversight of government programs.

Recently, more than [100 potentially ineligible recipients](#) received federal Payroll Protection Program (PPP) loans. Nearly \$7.4 million went to businesses ineligible to receive loans under the federal program. In a [review](#) of ineligible companies that received loans of at least \$150,000, Florida accounted for more than one out of every four unqualified businesses.

Transparency is necessary to ensure that only eligible businesses receive state and federal loans. Restricting access to government loan programs not only undermines the public's constitutional right of access to public records, but also precludes oversight of government spending. Accordingly, FAF opposes House Bill 379.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us.

With best regards,

FIRST AMENDMENT FOUNDATION

Pamela C. Marsh
President

cc: The Honorable Chris Sprowls, Speaker, Florida House
The Honorable Mike Giallombardo, Representative, Florida House
Jim Baltzelle, Associated Press, Chair, First Amendment Foundation
Samuel Morley, General Counsel, Florida Press Association
Lisa Nellesen Savage, Chair, Florida Society of News Editors

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